

CAUSES AND CURES OF STEREOTYPING, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION - I

Unit Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to :

- Define stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.
- Describe how members of different groups perceive inequality.
- Explain the nature and origins of stereotypes.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes can be defined as beliefs about what members of other groups are like. It is the oversimplified opinion of the members of other groups. Stereotypes can either be positive (for example, men with beards are smart and tough) or negative (for example, women are bad drivers).

Stereotype generalizes a particular characteristic or a number of characteristics to all the members of the group. Prejudice and discrimination have been the major cause of human suffering right from the time of inception of human civilization. It has influenced the course of history for centuries together all over the world e.g., Hitler's attempt to eliminate the entire Jew race. Prejudices manifest themselves in many forms. It may take the forms of physical violence to one extreme or it may appear in subtle forms like slurs or maintaining distance from people of a particular group. Very often people use prejudice and discrimination as synonyms in day-to-day conversation. But they have subtle differences.

Prejudice is the affective component of attitudes which can be defined as negative evaluation of members of other groups based on their group membership. For example, members of other groups we dislike are evaluated negatively i.e., we have prejudice towards them. When there comes a behavioral component to prejudice it is called discrimination. Discrimination is giving unfavorable treatment to members of other groups we dislike.

This unit especially looks upon the concept of stereotypes by defining and explaining in detail. It also looks at how individuals of different groups perceive inequality. The origin and nature of stereotypes is also focused in this unit. The concept of gender stereotypes and gender stereotyping is explained along with the growing need to understand the phenomena such as glass ceilings and glass cliff effect. There is also a growing concern of tokenism which has been confirmed by various laboratory researches. It needs to be noted even though two groups are rated the same but still there would be stereotypes present in those ratings. This unit thus, also indicates the scales which are helpful to understand the presence or absence of stereotypes. Many a times the victims of stereotypes don't even realize that they are the targets of stereotypical discrimination. Thus, with the help of research, this issue is brought to notice. Such stereotypical discrimination needs to be realized. This unit lights on the case of single people who are the victims of stereotypes but are not aware of it. Overall, this unit looks upon the various aspects of stereotypes.

1.2 HOW MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT GROUPS PERCEIVE INEQUALITY

Group members perceive inequality differently depending upon their membership in the targeted group or the group perpetrating the unequal treatment. For example, white and black Americans show considerable differences in their perception of prejudice and discrimination present in employment wages. In order to account the differences in the perceptions, the different meanings and implications derived from any potential change in the status relations between the groups should be considered. This can be explained with the prospect theory given by Kahneman and Tversky's (1984) for which the 2002 Nobel Prize in economics was awarded. According to this theory, people are **risk averse** i.e., people have the tendency to weigh possible losses more heavily than equivalent potential gains. For example, losing Rs 100 is perceived as more negative as compared to gaining the same amount.

Hence, whites perceive greater equality even from a potential "loss" for their group as compared to their historically privileged position. Whites will therefore respond negatively to additional movement toward equality. They will also assume that more changes have already occurred. Research evidence suggests that those white Americans, who highly identify themselves with their racial group, respond negatively with increased racism when their race-based privileges are questioned. They also respond

with greater support for tokenism which ensures that the number of African Americans employed is limited.

The perceived inequality is also influenced by one's socio-economic status. Individuals who have a higher socio-economic position usually think that they have achieved their status by means of fair competition. However, individuals with low socio-economic status think that they are unsuccessful because of the restrictions imposed by society and the structural system. It can be observed that individuals from lower socio-economic status perceive more inequality than individuals from high socio-economic backgrounds and vice versa.

1.3 THE NATURE AND ORIGINS OF STEREOTYPING

Stereotypes are cognitive components of attitudes. Cognitive component refers to the mental image people hold. It refers to the cognitive framework for receiving, interpreting, organizing and recalling information. The information which is consistent with a person's prejudices all receive more attention, will be remembered more accurately, more vividly and for a longer time than information received contrary to prejudiced views. So the cognitive component leads to formation of a vicious circle in which a person pays more attention to information consistent with existing prejudices and because he gets such information and prejudices become stronger and stronger. The cognitive component also refers to the beliefs and expectations a person has from the members of the particular group. They give emphasis on the beliefs and opinions of social groups. Stereotypes are a special type of mental framework for interpreting and processing social information. They exert strong effects on the ways in which we process incoming information. Dovidio et al. (1986) held that information relevant to a particular stereotype is processed more quickly than information not related to it. Once a person has developed a stereotype for some group, he tends to notice information that fits readily into this cognitive framework and to remember facts that are consistent with it. Thus, stereotypes are self-confirming. If information inconsistent with a stereotype does manage to enter consciousness it may be actively refuted, perhaps by recalling facts and information that are consistent with the stereotypes.

There are many studies showing that stereotypes influence our thoughts, e.g., in a study conducted by Bodenhausen (1988). He asked students to key the role of jurors in an imaginary court case. Half the subjects were informed that the accused came from New Mexico and his name was Carols Ramirez, thus activating a negative stereotype. Other subjects receive neutral information related to existing stereotypes. Furthermore, half the subjects received neutral information before receiving the evidence about the case while the other half received it after reading the evidence. Bodenhausen predicted that stereotypes will influence the processing of information. Specifically, he suggested-

1. It will change receivers' interpretation of such information
2. It will cause them to devote more effort to processing stereotype consistent rather than stereotype inconsistent information.
3. Both the above conditions will take place.

The results showed that the defendant was rated as more guilty when he had an ethnic name and this information was received by the judge before reviewing the evidence. This clearly showed that stereotypes cause individuals to engage in biased processing of social information. But it was not clear whether such bias shifts the interpretation of new information or leads to selective attention and rehearsal of stereotype supporting information. To answer this question, Bodenhausen conducted another study and got clear support for the assumption that stereotypes affect the amount of attention and rehearsal directed to the information received. It appears we tend to ignore information inconsistent with our stereotype. As stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are closely related, we will next focus on the nature and origins of stereotypes.

1.3.1 Stereotyping: Beliefs about social groups

Stereotypes about groups are labels or tags given to the members of that group. As depicted earlier, these can either be positive or negative. Stereotypes may include more than one trait. The components of these stereotypical expectancies may include traits, beliefs, and opinions about physical appearance, abilities and behaviors of the targeted groups. These traits can either be accurate or inaccurate; they may be agreed or disagreed by the members of the targeted groups.

One of the known stereotypes is **gender stereotypes**. These are beliefs concerning the characteristics of women and men which include both positive and negative traits. Typical traits associated with men are competent, stable, tough, self-confident, leader, strong, accomplishes, non-conformist, aggressive etc. Stereotypical characteristics associated with women are warm, emotional, kind, sensitive, follower, weak, friendly, fashionable, gentle, etc. Stereotypes of each gender are typically the opposite of one another. For example, on the positive stereotypes for women, they are viewed as being kind, nurturing, and friendly. On the negative side, they are perceived as being dependent, weak, and overly emotional. Thus, women are collectively seen as high on warmth but low on competence which is seen as relatively low in status and nonthreatening.

In the case of men, they are also perceived as having both positive and negative stereotypic traits (e.g., they are viewed as decisive, assertive, and accomplished, but also as aggressive, insensitive, and arrogant). Such traits showcase that men are high on competence and low on communal attributes which reflects high status. A finding reveals that as there is a strong emphasis on warmth in the stereotype for women, people perceive more positively about women on the whole compared to men.

Though women are liked, their traits are seen as less appropriate for high-status positions than the traits presumed to be possessed by men. Gender stereotypes of women's traits make them seem appropriate for "support roles" rather than "leadership roles". However, there is a vast change in the extent to which women participate in the labor force—from 20 percent in 1900 to 59 percent in 2005. Though women are working in various occupations, still these occupations bring less status and monetary compensation than comparably skilled male-dominated occupations.

In Indian context, the socialization process called **gender stereotyping** conveys directly or subtly the nuances of culturally approved notions of being and becoming a man or a woman. Norms, for becoming a man or woman, are decided by the family, community members and society at large which includes acceptable behavioral modes, personal attributes, and occupational roles. Thus, gender stereotyping puts men and women into distinct categories and this influences their health and well-being. This also leads to one being favored over the other.

A strong connection with a brand is established due to gender-based advertisements for different products. In reality, sex bias is distorted by media. A clear gender stereotyping is revealed even in advertisements for recruitment processes. On the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, India ranks 113 out of 135 countries. Research shows that 48% of the women drop out of the workforce even before they reach the middle of their careers. The traditional expectations about the role of men and women leads to continued gender stereotyping. According to these expectations, women are expected to play a role of "good wife" and men to show dominance.

Research suggests that both males and females find leadership by females to be unexpected. When confronted with female leaders some people demonstrate negative nonverbal expressions for example, facial expressions indicating displeasure or rejection. These cues are visible to other members of the group and they may interpret them as signs of incompetency of female leaders. This brings untold devastation to emerging female leaders.

However, the situation is improving day by day. Today, many females are not only hired but promoted to managerial positions. They are joining occupations and careers which were solely for males only to begin with. They are gaining an increased share of power and prestige. Research showed that both male and female subjects who were rated as leaders scored higher on traditionally masculine characteristics than did non leaders. In this study there was a little bias against choosing females as leaders if they demonstrated certain traits.

Studies have also demonstrated that now female employees do not receive lower on the job evaluation just because of their gender. In the interview setting also gender seems to play very little role. Gram and Schwab (1985) noted that jobs filled predominantly by females are not currently rated as less deserving of compensation than jobs filled with males

Stereotypes and Glass Ceiling

Women are growing up the career ladder in corporate settings but despite this, most are found at middle management and very few at the top management positions. This situation is called the glass ceiling which implies the final barrier that prevents women, as a group, from reaching the higher positions at the workplace. Many social psychologists suggest that the glass ceiling is considered as the final barrier that prevents females as a group from reaching top position in many organizations. U.S. The Department of Labor (1992) has defined glass ceilings as those artificial barriers based on attitudinal and organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing up in their organization. Recent studies have shown that finally men and women reach the same position via contrasting routes. However, women experience more difficulties on the way to the top. Research findings indicate that “think managers, think male” bias is prevalent due to which the glass ceiling effect is maintained. This is so because stereotypic traits of a manager overlap with the gender stereotypical traits of a man.

There are various consequences for the women when they reach the top position by breaking the glass ceiling. They experience less favorable outcomes than men. When they serve as leaders, especially in male dominated occupations, women are likely to experience gender discrimination.

Women who display masculine characteristics in their behavior face negative consequences. Research shows that when women violate traditional stereotypical roles and expectancies of warmth and nurturance and instead behave according to the prototype of a leader, particularly in masculine form, they are likely to experience hostility and rejection. Such violations of stereotypical expectancies lead to threat in men. This threat is evoked particularly among those inclined to sexually harass. The consequences of violating typical stereotypical expectancies are well known by both men and women. This has been demonstrated in research. In a study, both men and women were given a certain knowledge test. When the participants were told that they were highly successful on a test which was typical of the other gender, the participants were more likely to lie about which test they were successful on and also hid their success from others. This is so because of the fear that people have of social punishments that are followed by violations of gender typical expectancies. These results, thus, depicted that in order to attempt to defy gender stereotypes, one requires a lot of courage.

Stereotypes and the “Glass Cliff”

Several studies reveal that women are taken in the valued top positions when crisis situations arise and when there is greater risk of failure. This is referred to as the glass cliff effect. In a research project, archival records were studied by researchers. The analyzed archival records were of large companies on the London Stock Exchange. These researchers assessed performance of the large companies before new members were appointed to the board of directors. It Was found that companies that had

experienced consistently poor stock performance in the months preceding the appointment were more likely to appoint women to their boards as compared to when the companies were performing well.

A series of experiments were conducted to ensure that bad corporate performance history is the cause of selection of women in the top positions. These experiments were done on various populations e.g. students and managers. Though equally male and female candidates met the qualifications presented, the researchers found that when the conditions of position were risky, people selected women on such positions as compared to when the situation was not risky. This is how the glass cliff effect is supported by various researches implicating the sad reality of the presence of gender stereotypes in the society.

Consequences of Token Women in high places

A number of laboratory experiments have confirmed that tokenism exists. Tokenism is said to be present where only a few members of previously excluded or disadvantaged groups are admitted to higher positions. This can be a highly effective strategy for preventing collective protest in disadvantaged groups. Representation of women appears to be fair in organization due to tokenism. This form of subtle discrimination is seen in all situations but more in work settings. In a very general way, it refers to trivial positive actions towards the members of groups they dislike e.g. an organization may hire only one or two women just to depict and ward off any legal actions or just for the sake of maintaining the image of the organization. Small positive actions such as these serve to help in excusing or justifying in discrimination later on, e.g. token people may be refused to be helped when they need.

This tokenism can have two negative consequences-

- 1) When organizations indulge in tokenism, prejudices people go scot free as they flaunt their little acts of non-discrimination as proofs of them being non prejudiced.
- 2) Secondly, tokenism also leads to deterioration of self-esteem of the target person. This is so because, when a person realizes that he has been hired or promoted not because of his abilities but because s/he belongs to a certain category or group, it leads to decline in self-esteem. This was clearly shown in the research study conducted by Chacko (1982). In this study by Chacko (1982), young women managers were selected as participants and were asked to rate several factors and indicate the extent to which they have contributed to their being hired. They were also asked to fill up a questionnaire measuring organizational commitment. The results showed that when the participants rated their abilities as the main factor responsible for being hired, their organizational commitment was high but due to the fact that they are females, their organizational commitment was low. So, though tokenism appears to help at least a few members of the target group to begin with, in the long run they lead to negative feelings and frustration even among these beneficiaries.

Thus, tokenism has two negative effects. First, the presence of members from disadvantaged groups as tokens can serve as a public proof of how the system is fair and how they have also got the chance to reach up to the top position. Second, tokenism can lead to lowered self-esteem and confidence to the disadvantaged groups and also those few members selected as tokens.

Responses to those who speak out about discrimination

When unjust circumstances occur, complaining against it can draw people's attention to injustice, which can eventually help in the improvement. As complaining serves a positive function, similarly, it has a negative side also. Research shows that complaining can be seen as an attempt to escape from personal responsibilities and thus leading to suspicion in the observers. Moreover, the members of the group may disapprove discrimination claimed by their in-group members especially when they believe that this would suggest to the out-group members that the in-group is given to unjustified griping. However, the in-group members will approve that the complaint is appropriate when the discrimination is seemed to be serious and that complaining would help in improving the situation. In such a condition, the in-group members are likely to support their members those who are complaining about the discrimination.

Actual business managers would be apprehensive about fairness in their own organization and thus, be responsive to people who claim to have experiences racial discrimination. This has been studied in research. Researchers divided the white managers in two groups. The first group involved randomly assigned white business managers to consider what their company does to increase diversity. The second group was assigned to control conditions which included managers who were asked to consider what their company does to increase environmental sustainability. A detailed case file documenting racial discrimination was then presented to both the groups. They were asked to consider that the case presented had occurred in their own company. The first group, who had thought about diversity efforts, perceived the discrimination claim as less legitimate and less cause of concern. They also reported feeling less willing to support the employee filing the discrimination claim as compared to the second group who had not thought about diversity efforts in their organization. These researchers showed that organizations taking efforts for diversity and preparing proper structure to manage diversity would create "illusion of fairness" and this leads to undermining majority group members' sensitivity to actual discrimination against people from minority groups. In addition to this, this illusion ultimately yields more negative responses to minorities who do claim discrimination.

1.3.2 Is stereotyping absent if members of different groups are rated the same?

The answer to the above question seems to be “yes” but it is not so which can be clarified with the help of work on shifting standards done by Biernat (2012). Shifting standards indicate that although the same evaluation ratings are given to members of different groups, stereotypes influence those ratings.

People use the same words but different standards to evaluate different objects. For instance, if we say “I have a huge bookshelf and a big house”, does this mean that the size of the bookshelf is somewhere close to the house? Absolutely not! This is so because to evaluate objects we use different comparisons. Similarly, we use different comparisons when evaluating people. Appraising “excellent player” to a child playing cricket is different than when we say excellent to a national level cricket player. In this example, the child is excellent as compared to other children of the same age group and the national level player is excellent in comparison to other professional players. Such standards which can take different meanings even when the same rating is given to two quite different targets are called subjective scales. Other standards will always mean the same thing, no matter what. They are referred to as objective scales.

If a person has to evaluate a male and female applicant to decide who should be promoted, and if this person perceives males as more competent than females, then s/he may rate, say for example, “good” to both of them. This rating may translate into different meanings to different objects of evaluation. However, if the same person is asked to rate male and female applicants on their potential capabilities in rupees they will sell per year, the male will be rated higher as compared to the female applicants. This shows how subjective evaluations can conceal the presence of stereotypes as compared to objective scales.

1.3.3 Can we be the victims of stereotyping and not even recognize it: The Case of single people

The question arises whether people who are targets of stereotypes recognize it. For this, DePaulo (2006) points instance of such question in her research on singlism - the negative stereotyping and discrimination directed towards people who are single. In her research along with Morris (2006), it was found that people attribute different characteristics to married people and those who are single. Married people are perceived as mature, stable, kind, happy, honest, loving and giving. On the other hand, single people are attributed as immature, insecure, self-centered, unhappy, ugly, lonely and independent. When people were asked who they would prefer to rent property to, married people were chosen as compared to single people. Though such discrimination exists, this inequality is not salient because single people fail to recognize. In the same research, only 4 percent of the singles spontaneously mentioned “single” as a category and only 30 percent said that singles might be stigmatized.

The reason why singles themselves fail to acknowledge singlism is because of the lack of awareness of the negative stereotypes and discrimination they face even in day to day life. However, it might also happen that single people feel that such discrimination is legitimate. In a research, participants were asked whether a landlord who refused to rent property to various categories of people had stereotypes and engaged in discrimination. These categories of people involved African Americans, women, homosexuals, singles or obese people. The participants agreed that landlord's refusal to rent property was the result of stereotypes and discrimination s/he had when the decision was made for the categories - African Americans, women, homosexuals or obese people. However, participants reported that the landlord neither had stereotypes nor engaged into discrimination when deciding for single people. These results suggested that both single and married people see discrimination against single people as legitimate as any other forms of discrimination.

Researchers also reveal the central reason for this widespread and heavily legitimized concept of singlism. DePaulo and Morris (2006) reason out that negative stereotypes and discrimination against singles serve to protect and glorify important institution of marriage. This institution holds that finding and marrying one's soul mate is crucial to have a meaningful life. However, this existing belief is challenged by single people and thus, derogating those who challenge that idea, we can all believe in vital cultural myths.

1.3.4 Why do people form and use stereotypes?

People form stereotypes because they often function as schemas. Schemas are cognitive frameworks which help in organizing, interpreting and recalling information. Categorizing may help people because it requires less cognitive effort in many situations. Thus, people form stereotypes to conserve their cognitive effort. Forming such frameworks and relying on them is easy when responding to others.

When we interact with a person, the stereotypes get activated and thus the typical trait possessed by the members of the stereotypic group comes automatically to our minds. Stereotypes also act as theories which guide what information should be attended and influences how we process social information. However, when we interact with a person who doesn't fit into a stereotypical category, people do not revise their stereotypes; rather they are looked upon as special cases and put into special categories known as subtypes. Subtypes include people who do not confirm the stereotype or schema. These subtypes act as a protection to existing stereotypes.

Many theorists suggest that stereotypes are maintained and not changed. However, they are subject to change when the nature of the relationship between those groups' changes. This is so because when the relationship changes so do behaviors of other groups are perceived to be different.

An interesting study was done by Dasgupta and Asgari (2004). In this study, the researchers first assessed women students' gender stereotypes in their first year and second year in college. There were two groups of

students. One group was studying in women's college where they were repeatedly exposed in their second year to women faculty who were behaving in nontraditional ways. The second group attended a coeducational college where the students had considerably less exposure to women faculty. It was predicted that stereotypes would change when exposed to women's colleges as compared to coeducational colleges. The results supported the prediction. Students' agreement with gender stereotypes was significantly reduced in the first group who attended women's college which had women faculties behaving in nontraditional ways as compared to the second group which attended coeducational college. The research also supported the extent of stereotype change that was predicted by the number of women faculty the students had exposure to in a classroom setting.

Check your progress

1. What is a stereotype? Write your answer with suitable examples.
2. Write a detailed note on gender stereotypes.
3. How inequality is perceived by different groups? Explain in brief.
4. Discuss people responding to discrimination.

1.4 LET'S SUM UP

Stereotypes are the beliefs about what members of other groups are like. It can be positive or negative. The members of different groups perceive inequality and any programs for social change differently depending upon their membership in the targeted group or the group perpetrating the unequal treatment. Stereotypes help us to determine the characteristics of persons whom we have not even met earlier just on the basis of the social group they belong to. Stereotypes Also have an impact on which and how information is processed. Information relevant to our stereotypes is processed more quickly and remembered better than information that is not related.

Most of the time, people have a tendency to filter out information inconsistent to our stereotype through reasoning and argument. Sometimes the information is changed in a subtle way to make it consistent with the stereotype. Stereotypes once formed are difficult to change or alter them. However, theorists indicate that stereotypes will be stable as long as the nature of relationship that exists between those groups is stable. Research suggests that as the relation between the groups is altered, stereotypes that an individual holds tend to change. When exposed to women in nontraditional roles show reductions in gender stereotyping.

Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the different characteristics possessed by males and females. Women are viewed as low on status and men as high on it. In addition, women are stereotyped as high on warmth and low on competence, however; on the other hand, men are stereotyped as low on warmth and high on competence. The glass ceiling refers to a barrier that prevents women from reaching the top position in an organization. They are likely to be affected by the bias 'think manager- think male'.

However, women are taken up on the high position when there is risk involved. This effect is known as the glass cliff effect. Research evidence found that women were appointed on the boards when the stock performance of the organization was poorer than when it was better. In a series of experiments, it was found that, even though men and women were equally qualified, females were significantly more likely to get selected when the position was risky than when it was not. A very few women pass the glass ceiling and reach to the top. This is known as tokenism. It has two negative impacts. One, it helps in showcasing how organizations are fair in giving opportunity and working with women. Two, it may have a detrimental effect on the self-esteem and confidence of the targeted group and the tokens. Tokenism helps maintain people's perceptions of fairness and their belief in meritocracy.

Though there are strong stereotypes for males and females both but for females they are negative ones while for males they are positive ones. For example, in many cultures it is believed that men have traits like decisiveness, aggressiveness, ambition and logical patterns of thought. Females, on the other hand, are believed to have fewer desirable characteristics like passivity, submissiveness, high emotionality and indecisiveness. Some positive characteristics are also included like sensitivity, warmth etc. But overall, they are believed to possess traits less suitable for valued roles like leadership, authority etc.

These stereotypes influence the perceptions and behavior of a large number of individuals throughout the world. Heilman reported the impact of gender stereotypes in females in work settings. He found that females are perceived as less suitable for jobs traditionally held by males. For example, females who are physically attractive are perceived as being more feminine and therefore are less suitable for managerial roles than females who are less physically attractive. Though the impact of gender stereotypes can be reduced by providing clear evidence of their abilities or competence, the hold of stereotype on occupations remains and leads to discrimination based on gender.

Though people give the same rating to different people, objects, or events, the ratings may be biased. This is called shifting standards. A subjective scale conceals stereotypes. When women are evaluated using objective scales, they receive worse outcomes.

Victims of stereotypes may also fail to recognize it, such as people who are single. Singlism is negative stereotyping and discrimination directed towards people who are single which is done by single as well as married people. Married people are perceived favorably as compared to single people.

Stereotypes function as schemas which help organize information. Stereotypes are formed and used to conserve cognitive effort. When a special case is encountered which doesn't fit the traditional stereotypes, then the stereotypes don't change; rather they are organized in a category

called subtypes. Stereotypes may change only when the relationship between the groups is changed.

1.5 QUESTIONS

1. How do people form and use stereotypes? Explain in detail.
2. Discuss the positive and negative stereotypes and its effects.
3.
 - a. Write a detailed note on the glass ceiling.
 - b. How do people fail to recognize stereotyping in the case of single people? Write your answer with suitable examples.
4. Explain stereotyping absent.
5. Write short notes on
 - a) Consequences of token women in high places
 - b) Glass Cliff
 - c) Beliefs about social groups
 - d) Risk averse.

1.6 References

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CAUSES AND CURES OF STEREOTYPING, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION - II

Unit Structure

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand:

- Identify the factors leading to prejudice against specific groups.
- Explain the origins of prejudice.
- Discuss subtle forms of discrimination.
- Recognize the ways of reducing the effects of prejudice.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As we have already seen in the previous unit, prejudice is the affective or feeling component of attitude which involves negative feelings towards other members based on their group membership. In this unit, we focus on the various factors that lead to prejudice against specific groups. The emphasis is also on understanding the origins of prejudice. Prejudice has

influenced in history for centuries together all over the world e.g. Hitler's attempt to eliminate entire Jew race, caste system in India, apartheid system in South Africa, etc. Prejudices manifest themselves in many forms. It may take the forms of physical violence to one extreme or it may appear in subtle forms like slurs or maintaining distance from people of a particular group. Prejudice and discrimination is used as synonyms by many people in day to day conversation. But there are certain differences between them.

Discrimination is the behavioral component of attitudes which involves treating unfavorably to the members of some prejudiced social group. Discrimination is present in society explicitly or in a subtle form. At the end of this unit, we will understand various techniques to counter prejudice.

2.2 PREJUDICE: FEELINGS TOWARD SOCIAL GROUPS

Prejudice is traditionally thought of as the feeling component of attitudes toward social groups. It reflects a negative response to another person solely because the person is a member of a particular group. In the 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport referred to prejudice as "antipathy" which means such generalization to the group as a whole. In this sense, prejudice is not personal because it is an affective reaction toward the category.

Thus, a prejudice toward a social group will lead to evaluation of all its members negatively only because they are members of that group. Discrimination has been traditionally defined as unfavorable treatment or negative actions directed toward members of disliked groups. The prejudice will or will not be expressed in overt discrimination based on the perceived norms or acceptability of doing so.

Research findings reveal that when individuals score higher on measures of prejudice than when they score lower, they process information about the targeted group differently. For instance, people give more attention to the information related to the targeted group and its members. When an individual's group membership seems ambiguous i.e. when people cannot figure out which group the individual belongs to, then they are concerned with learning about it. This is so because we believe the groups have underlying essence. Essence can be understood as a feature, often some biologically one, that distinguishes one group from other groups, which can serve as justification for their differential treatment.

Researchers reveal that all prejudices are different. Though prejudice includes negative feelings, these feelings will be different for different groups. These negative emotions can be fear, anger, envy, guilt, or disgust. Not all prejudices are due to some explicit attitude; rather some prejudices can be a result of some implicit associations. In other words, our judgments and interaction with others can be influenced without being aware of prejudice being present.

2.2.1 The Origins of Prejudice: Contrasting Perspectives

An important question arises of where prejudice comes from and why it persists. The following perspectives will aid in understanding the origins of prejudice.

Threats to Self Esteem

Self-esteem refers to subjective evaluation of one's own worth. People want to see their group as worthy and more positive than another group. When people see some event potential of threatening their group's self-esteem, they may react by devaluing the source of the threat. Research also indicates that perceiving a threat can lead us to identify more with our in-group.

When our group's image is threatened, in-group members bolster their own group's image by holding prejudiced views of an out-group. By derogating members of another group, we can affirm our own group's comparative value. This is strongly conveyed when a threat is experienced.

Competition for Resources as a Source of Prejudice

Many basic things that people want are scarce. These are zero-sum outcomes which mean if one group gets them then the other cannot. The realistic conflict theory explains the cause of prejudice as when the competition over some resource escalates members of in-group and out-group will perceive each other in negative terms. Competitions are inevitable as the wants and needs of human beings are infinite while the resources to satisfy these wants are limited. So, the struggle exists over jobs, houses, food grains, etc. As struggle gets prolonged, members of conflicting groups start evaluating each other in increasingly negative ways and start regarding each other as enemies which must be put to its place. Both groups start considering themselves as morally superior and withdraw in their own shell. So, what starts as simple, relatively emotional and hatred free competition turns into a fully blown hatred filled highly with emotionally charged conflict leading to strong negative prejudices. These negative views increase eventually. Such views will involve labeling each other as "enemies", viewing one's own group as morally superior, drawing the boundaries between themselves and their opponents more firmly, and under extreme circumstances, may come to see the opposing group as not even human. Thus, starting with simple competition can lead to full-scale prejudice.

Social Categorization in the Indian Context

People divide the social world into separate categories. Social categorization is the tendency to divide the social world in two separate categories- in-group and out-group.

The in-group is the social group to which an individual perceives himself or herself as belonging to us. The out group is any group other than the

one to which individuals are perceived to belong to them. This social categorization can be done on various dimensions as - race, religion, sex, age, ethnic background and occupation.

This social categorization has great impact on behavior as follows:

1. In group members are viewed in more favorable terms than out group members.
2. People assume that our group members possess more undesirable traits than the in-group members.
3. People also believe that all out-group members are similar to each other I.e. homogenous than in group members. So, the out-group members are disliked more. This behavioral tendency leads to attribution error. It is to make more favorable and flattering attributions about members of one's own group than about the members of another group. This is the reason why we attribute the desirable characteristics of in group members to stable internal factors.

Tajfel and his colleagues (1991) have given an interesting answer to the question of how social categorization leads to prejudice. They proposed social identity theory in order to explain this. This theory suggests that people identify themselves with specific social groups. It also further says that our self-esteem is enhanced with our group membership. As each group seeks to view itself superior and different from rivals, prejudice arises out of clash of social perceptions.

In the Indian context, society has been categorized based on various aspects such as religion, caste, gender, language, region, socioeconomic status, etc. These categorizations help to maintain social order and harmony. When these groups want power and politics, prejudices emerge which causes challenges to maintain sharing, bonding and connectedness. Research shows prejudices can be originated even when groups are formed on a minimal or trivial basis.

2.3 DISCRIMINATION: PREJUDICE IN ACTION

Discrimination refers to negative actions toward the objects of various types of prejudice such gender, racial, ethnic etc. The goal of discriminatory behavior is to harm the member of the target group but it may be done either in very subtle form or very openly depending upon the constraints imposed by the situation. However, such discriminations have decreased over the years in many countries. But still discrimination may be present in subtle ways and as it exists, we will look at ways to measure it.

2.3.1 Modern Racism: More Subtle, but Just as Harmful

Long time back, people used to openly express their racist prejudices. However, at present, few Americans express anti-black statements. This

doesn't mean that the prejudiced attitudes have vanished. Rather, social psychologists believe that modern racism is present which involves concealing prejudice from others in public settings, but expressing it in safe settings. However, research findings suggest that some people may have racist prejudices but they themselves would be unaware of.

Measuring Implicit Racial Attitudes

Racial attitudes can be measured directly by asking people to express their views. However, prejudiced racial attitudes can also be implicit which cannot be accepted by the people. Holding such prejudices can influence behavior but people will be unaware of it and they might vigorously deny having such views. Hence, several methods have been developed to measure implicit racial attitudes. Most of these methods are based on priming. Priming is a technique in which exposure to a certain stimulus or event influences a response to a subsequent stimulus. Priming activates information in memory available which then influences current reactions.

One of such techniques which use priming is known as **bona fide pipeline**. In this technique, participants are first briefly exposed to faces of people belonging to various racial groups (blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos) and then they see various adjectives. After seeing the adjectives, they are asked to indicate whether they have a "good" or "bad" meaning by pushing one of two buttons. Implicit racial attitudes of the participants will be revealed by how quickly they respond to the words that have a negative meaning. However, on the other hand, participants will take more time to respond to words with a positive meaning after being primed with the faces of those same minority group members. This is so because the positive meaning is inconsistent with the negative attitude stimulated by the priming stimulus. Research indicates that implicit racial attitudes are automatically elicited. These attitudes influence decisions and degree of friendliness that is expressed in interaction with the members of the target group.

How Prejudiced People Maintain an "Unprejudiced" Self-Image

Though implicit racial prejudices exist, many white Americans believe that they are unprejudiced. Research suggests people can maintain unprejudiced self-image through social comparison. People compare themselves with extreme images of bigots and perceive themselves as not fitting that prototype.

When We Confront What Our Group has done to another Group

People have a tendency to think that the group which they belong to or identify with is good and moral. Research has been conducted to study how people respond when they learn about the prejudicial actions of their own group. Studies show that torturing out-group was perceived as justifiable when it was a long-standing practice as compared to when it was seen as something new. Torture committed by in-group members is perceived as more moral than when it was committed by other groups.

When people perceive that their group is responsible for illegitimate wrongdoings, an emotional response called collective guilt is evoked. In order to avoid the aversive feelings of collective guilt, people may blame the victims so that they will feel less burdened. This blaming will even reach to the extreme where in-group members will exclude the victims from the category of “human”. People may also use motivated forgetting of the harm done by them and in-group members.

Check your progress

- a. Define prejudice with examples.
- b. What is discrimination and how it occurs?
- c. Write a detailed note on prejudice.

2.4 WHY PREJUDICE IS NOT INEVITABLE: TECHNIQUES FOR COUNTERING ITS EFFECTS

Prejudice appears to be a common aspect of life in most societies. In some conditions, prejudice can be reduced. The following part focuses on the techniques to counter the effects of prejudice.

2.4.1 On Learning Not to Hate

Social psychologists are of the view that prejudiced behavior is a learned behavior. It is learned in the same way as any other behavior is learned. Since it is learned it can also be reduced by unlearning and learning new patterns of reactions. According to learning viewpoint, we learn prejudice behavior in three ways:

- a. Through parents, teachers and peers
- b. Through mass-media
- c. Through models.

a. Parents, teachers and peers:

Children are not born with prejudice. Children learn these prejudices from their elders, parents, teachers and peers. Children learn these behaviors at an early age and this behavior pattern continues later in life. So, if parents avoid providing training to the children that encourage discrimination, then we can reduce prejudice. Thus, prejudice can be reduced by learning not to hate.

According to the social learning view, children are directly rewarded (with love, praise, and approval) to hold and express negative attitudes toward various social groups. People also develop such prejudices through their own experiences. Research indicates that when white participants' parents were prejudiced, participants' own positive interactions with minority group were less and their behavior was observed as more discriminatory when interacting with African Americans.

Learning from parents also depends on how much children identify with their parents. The more children identify with their parents, the more they are influenced by their parents and thus, may hold prejudices toward certain social groups. Thus, parents and even institutions which exert strong influence on adults can help people mold prejudices.

It is very difficult to tell parents that they have prejudiced thinking towards a particular group and that they need to overcome such prejudiced behavior. Many parents would not accept that they are prejudiced, instead they would view their negative attitude towards various groups as fully justified. It is very necessary to convince the parents that there exists a problem that needs to be tackled.

Parents can also be convinced that prejudice harms not only those who are its victims but also those who hold such views as well. This is because an individual who has prejudiced feelings experiences anxiety, fear and anger. If parents realize the detrimental consequences of prejudice to their children's self-development, then they would take necessary steps to see to it that their children do not develop prejudice or harbor negative feelings about a particular group.

b. Mass Media:

Films and press have a considerable influence on our behavior. The various characters depicted in the films should be such that they give a secular message. Films or printed literature should not put a particular group in a bad light or create a poor image of a particular community. Film censor boards can play an important role in checking prejudice behavior transmitted in subtle forms through films.

c. Model:

Social learning theory has pointed out the role of models in influencing our behavior. Parents and teachers are our best models. Besides them, political leaders, social reformers or religious leaders can also be models. Such models should not be encouraged to transmit prejudiced behavior. Government can also see to it that famous personalities do not pass on the message of prejudice and discrimination to the masses.

2.4.2 The Potential Benefits of Contact

In order to reduce racial prejudice, the degree of contact between different groups can be increased. This idea is known as the contact **hypothesis**. When contact among people from different groups is increased, the growing recognition of similarities can change the categorizations that people have already formed. By knowing the norms of the out-group members can actually aid in understanding that the norms of the group are not so "anti-out-group" as individuals might initially have believed. Research also indicates that friendships between different group members can reduce anxiety about future encounters with out-group members. However, it should be noted that the contact between the groups should take place under specific favorable conditions.

Research by Sherif (1966) has shown that enhancing intergroup interaction and cooperation can lead to declines in hostile reactions and negative feelings. This happens because of following reasons:

1. Noticing Similarities

When contact between two groups increases, the group members notice the number of similar attitudes they share between them, this increases understanding of either group and enhances mutual attraction. This in turn leads to decline in prejudice.

2. Mere Exposure Effect

Repeated contact may lead to positive feelings and attitudes through mere exposure. The more familiar a person is to us, the more we like him.

3. Perception of inconsistent information

Due to the increased number of similarities, the group members now perceive information that is inconsistent with their stereotypes regarding other group members. Thus, it can help to reduce stereotypes about the out-group members.

4. Reduce illusion of out-group homogeneity

Increased contact reduces illusion of outgroup homogeneity. That is, because of contact with other members, people realize that all of them are different and not similar as was perceived.

To achieve these effects from contact hypothesis certain conditions must be satisfied;

- i. The groups that will contact must have equal social status.
- ii. The norms of the contact must support and encourage group equality.
- iii. The contact between the groups must be informal, so that they can get to know one another on a one-to-one basis.
- iv. The contact between groups must involve cooperation and interdependence. This can be achieved by working towards shared goals.
- v. The groups must interact in ways that permit disinformation of negative stereotyped beliefs about one another.
- vi. The persons involved must view one another as typical of their respective groups, only then will they generalize their pleasant contacts to other persons and situations.

But these conditions are rarely found in real life. So social psychologists have suggested the extended contact hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that direct contact between persons from different groups is not essential for reducing prejudice between them. In fact, such beneficial effects can

be produced if the persons in question merely know that persons in their own group have formed friendship with persons from the said group.

The extended contact hypothesis is successful in reducing prejudice because:

1. The group members realize that it is acceptable to form relationships with members of other groups.
2. Knowing that members of one's own group enjoys friendship with our group can help reduce anxiety about our group members.
3. Interaction with other group members also conveys the message that our group members do not dislike the in-group members. It helps to clear misunderstandings.
4. Cross-group friendships increase understanding of empathetic attitudes between two groups.

Thus, friendly co-operative contact between persons from different social groups could indeed promote respect and liking between them. When individuals get to know one another, many anxieties, stereotypes and false perceptions that have previously kept them apart seem to vanish in warmth of new friendship and prejudice melts.

2.4.3 Recategorization: Changing the Boundaries

Recategorizations, termed by social psychologists, indicate the shift of boundary between “us” and “them”. This technique can be used to reduce prejudice. According to the common in-group identity model, when individuals view themselves as members of a single social identity, their attitudes toward each other become more positive. In order to induce the perception of single social identity, the individuals belonging to different groups can work together toward shared or superordinate goals. This leads to reduction of feelings of hostility toward the former out-group members. Research reveals the usefulness of this technique in laboratory settings and on the field. This technique is also found to be powerful in reducing negative feelings toward an out-group even when they had a long history, including one group’s brutality toward another. Other research studies also suggested that forming new subgroups composed of members from competing groups can help reduce prejudice.

2.4.4 The Benefits of Guilt for Prejudice Reduction

When people encounter that they have done wrongdoings towards other groups, collective guilt will help in reducing prejudice. Similarly, when a person is a member of a group which has a history of being prejudiced toward another group, they may experience guilt by association. Research suggests that such feelings of guilt can aid in reducing prejudices towards other groups.

2.4.5 Can We Learn to “Just Say No” to Stereotyping and Biased Attributions?

Individuals themselves can regulate their thoughts, beliefs and feelings toward out-group members. If individuals say “no” to the stereotypic habit then the prejudices can be actively reduced. Research evidence also suggests that people can learn to not rely on stereotypes they already possess.

2.4.6 Social Influence as a means of reducing Prejudice

Social influence also has a great impact on reducing prejudices. When people are provided with evidence that their own group members are like members of another group that is typically the target of prejudice, it can sometimes serve to weaken negative reactions.

Human beings have the tendency to compare. We also compare what is the extent of prejudice others are having in comparison to us. If people realize that their own views are more prejudiced than that of others, they might be motivated to reduce their prejudice.

These social psychologists gave Caucasian students a list of 19 traits. They asked them to estimate how many African American possess each of the 19 traits. Out of the 19, nine were positive and ten were negative traits.

After completing the estimation, students were informed that other students in the university disagreed with their ratings. Some students were told that other students viewed African Americans more positively than they did (favorable feedback condition). Some students had less favorable views about African Americans than they did had (unfavorable feedback condition). After receiving this information, the Caucasian students were again asked to rate the African American students on the 19 traits.

As predicted, racial attitudes were influenced by the feedback they received. That is, students in unfavorable feedback gave more negative ratings the second time whereas students in favorable feedback condition gave more positive ratings than the first time.

2.5 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE ROLE OF EXISTENTIAL THREAT IN PREJUDICE?

There has been a widespread prejudice toward atheists in the United States and other countries. Research has found that prejudice towards atheists is explicit and strong as compared to prejudice toward almost any other group e.g. Muslims, ethnic minorities and gay people. American Christians are most likely to refuse to vote for an atheist for public office. They perceive atheists as untrustworthy and report fear and disgust toward them. This might be because atheists are perceived as a threat to widely shared in-group values and thus a threat to existing social order that provides meaning.

People's own existential anxiety affects prejudice towards atheists. Existential anxiety arises from awareness of our own mortality. **Terror management theory** suggests that awareness about one's own death evokes existential threat. In order to reduce this threat, people adhere to existing cultural worldviews. As atheists don't believe in the existence of God and cultural values, they are likely to be perceived as a strong existential threat.

Research has been conducted to test this idea. In this research, college students were randomly assigned to one of two groups. In the first group, students were asked to think about their own death. This was the mortality salient condition. Students in the second group were asked to think about a painful event which was the control condition. After a delay, the participants in both conditions were asked certain questions in relation to Atheists (people who do not believe in God) and Quakers (people who adhere to a small Christian organization). Participants were asked about their feelings towards these two groups, how much distance they would like to maintain between themselves and those groups and how much they would trust members of those two groups.

The results showed the same pattern with respect to negative responses, social distancing and distrust. Atheists were perceived more negatively than Quakers in both the conditions. Participants wanted to maintain greater distance from atheists than Quakers. However, participants in the first condition responded extremely negatively towards atheists as compared to the second condition i.e. when mortality was made more salient participants responded negatively towards atheists.

This research indicates that our own existential concerns can evoke prejudices towards other groups which are perceived as a fundamental threat to our cultural worldview. This is so because people adhere to cultural worldview in order to protect themselves from the terror of mortality. In other words, the mere presence of atheists may raise concerns about mortality.

Check your progress

1. Write the negative effects of prejudice on society.
2. What is existential threat in prejudice? Write your answer with suitable examples.
3. Write a detailed note on terror management theory.
4. What research tells us about 'just say no' to stereotype?

2.6 LET'S SUM UP

Prejudice is a negative feeling towards members of other groups. Prejudices can include specific negative emotions such as anger, pity, disgust, guilt and envy.

Prejudice may originate when the self-esteem of in-group members is threatened. According to realistic conflict theory, competition over resources escalates prejudice. People have a tendency to socially categorize other people in terms of in group and outgroup members. A person is considered to be an in-group member when he/she is perceived as belonging to one's own group and regarded as out group when perceived to be belonging to another group. One may distinguish between one's own group from others on the basis of various factors such as age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity and geographical location. People belonging to their own group are perceived in a favorable light, while people belonging to other groups are viewed in negative terms. Out group people are disliked and are considered to be homogenous and assumed to be possessing negative traits. Studies have found the existence of these negative feelings even when the groups were formed purely for experimental purpose and had no existence beyond the experiment. Research evidence supports the concept that social categorization is indeed one of the strong bases for formation of prejudice.

When these prejudices take a form of behavior, it is called discrimination. Modern racism is said to be present when racial discrimination is present in a subtle form. A technique called bona fide pipeline can be helpful to measure implicit prejudices.

Social psychologists have found various techniques to reduce prejudice. As the social learning view suggests that prejudices are learned through rewards, parents can encourage non prejudicial attitudes from childhood. This can be done by drawing attention of parents to their own prejudiced views and convincing them about the crucial role they play in maintaining the chain of bigotry. While there are some parents who consciously or unconsciously influence their child to hate, there are parents who genuinely desire to provide them with a more positive view of the social world. School teachers also play an important role in children's understanding of others. Another technique is contact hypothesis. It suggests that when there is an increase in contact between the two groups, it aids in reducing prejudice. Common in-group identity model suggests that a shared or superordinate goal between two groups can help in countering the effects of prejudice. Recategorization of groups can also help in reducing prejudice. Explicitly refusing to hold prejudices is also helpful. By inducing collective guilt can in turn help reduce prejudice. It also increases anti-discrimination behavior. Social influence can be used effectively to reduce prejudice.

Terror management theory suggests that awareness of our own death elicits existential threat. To reduce this threat, individuals adhere to

cultural worldview and thus may hold prejudices towards atheists as they are perceived as an existential threat.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the origin of prejudice in detail.
2. Describe modern racism.
 - a. Write a detailed note on learning not to hate.
 - b. Write in brief about the recategorization.
3. Explain the role of prejudice in discrimination. Write your answer with suitable examples.
4. Write short notes on
 - a) Bona fide pipeline
 - b) Potential benefits of contact
 - c) Benefits of guilt for prejudice reduction
 - d) Social influence as a means of reducing prejudice.

2.8 References

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SOCIAL INFLUENCE: CHANGING OTHERS BEHAVIOUR- I

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Conformity: how do norms and groups influence our behavior
 - 3.2.1 Definition of conformity
 - 3.2.2 Social pressure
 - 3.2.3 Emergence of social norms
 - 3.2.4 Factor affecting conformity
 - 3.2.5 Basis of conformity: choosing to 'go along'
 - 3.2.6 Downside of conformity
 - 3.2.7 Why do we sometimes not conform?
 - 3.2.8 Minority influence
- 3.3 What research tells us about how much we really conform?
- 3.4 Let's sum up
- 3.5 Questions
- 3.6 References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- Understanding the phenomenon of social influence
- Knowing why we indulge into conformity
- Understanding social norms
- Recognizing what conformity is and factors affecting conformity
- Discussing the minorities view over conformation
- Recognizing why we 'go along' and why do we resist to 'go along'
- Figuring out if there is any difference to conform between men and women

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social influence can be defined as efforts by one or more individuals to change the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, or behaviours of one or more others. For example, our teachers have an influence on our academics and our parents have an influence on our personal lives. Social influence happens to occur when a person's thoughts or actions have been affected due to other people. It is a powerful force, which frequently succeeds in changing behaviours of individuals towards those it is aimed at. In this chapter we will be focusing on how the changes into behavior take place via social influence. Those forms that are specifically examined by the social psychologists as a major form of influence will be studied in this

module. First, conformity, regarding how changes in behaviour takes place by others' efforts by means of norms about how to behave in a particular situation. Second, compliance, involving efforts to bring change in others behavior through direct requests. Lastly, obedience, which consists of following commands or direct orders from others.

3.2 CONFORMITY: HOW DO NORMS AND GROUPS INFLUENCE OUR BEHAVIOR?

Have you ever experienced your phone ringing while you are giving an exam? What would your sudden reaction be, most probably it would be to either disconnect the phone call or put the phone on silent mode. Ever wondered why you do that? Probably because you were following the social norm clearly defined in the given context leading to greater conformity, that is taking away the disturbance in a situation where remaining quiet is expected. Similarly, social norms which are clearer involve greater conformity as compared to the social norms which are less clear concerning the correct action to be made in a given situation. Conformity is doing what you are ought to in an 'expected' situation. In other words they are the pressures to behave consistently with regard to what we ought to or what we should. These rules are known as social norms, be it either subtle or obvious exerting effects that are powerful on our behaviours. In some situations, these social norms are fairly detailed and are stated explicitly. For example, laws set by our government through the constitutional articles. In other cases, these norms may be rather implicit or may have been developed in an informal way. For example, try to look your best while appearing for a job interview. Despite whether these norms are implicit or explicit, they are followed by most of them for most of the time.

How Much Do We Conform? More Than We Think

Conformity happens to be a fact of our social lives. We tend to dress in the similar styles as our friends, listen to the same music, read the same books and watch the same movies. In all, we find much comfort when we are as similar to our family and friends as when we are different from them. The question is, do we recognize how influenced we are in this way? Research answers to it as, no we aren't! we, humans, think of ourselves as standing out of the crowd, feeling that others would conform but we wouldn't. Research findings state that people tend to underestimate the influence that they have in their own actions because while in the process of understanding these actions, focus on internal information is placed more than the overtones. For instance, we know that our choice to dress in a popular style is because of our liking for it and not because others wear it. But when the same judgement is made about other people, we assume them to be the sheep following the herd. This phenomenon is also called introspection illusion, the fact that conformity often takes place unconsciously and hence we tend to escape introspecting/notice ourselves. It appears that we tend to display conformity in many areas but we underestimate the extent to which actions of others influence us.

3.2.1 Definition of conformity

Conformity is a type of social influence that involves individuals changing their attitudes or behaviours in order to adhere or to stick to the existing social norms in a given situation.

3.2.2 Social Pressure

Ever come across a situation where your own actions, judgments or conclusions are different from those reached by other people? There are good chances that you may feel anxious about not being able to conform along with the group facing a dilemma as to which answer to accept, theirs or yours? To answer this question, insights into these behaviours were provided by a study held by Solomon Asch. In his study called, Asch's line judgment task, participants were asked to indicate (out of the 3 lines) which of the lines matched the comparison standard line. Participants were asked to make these judgments allowed only after hearing answers of several other people- all of whom were Asch's assistants. On a certain trial all the assistants gave wrong answers, exposing participants to high pressures of conformity. It was found that 76% of the participants went along with the false answer suggested by the group. Particularly, these findings helped find the difference between public conformity and private conformity.

3.2.3 Emergence of Social Norms

Social influence of private acceptance was illustrated by another founder of social psychology, Mazafer Sherif. He posed two important questions, first, about the development of social norms in groups and second, the intensity of the social influence after the emergence of those norms. To examine these, he implied an interesting situation involving the Autokinetic phenomenon. Autokinetic movement refers to a situation when people are placed in a dark room while being exposed to a single stationary point of light, most of them view or perceive the light to be moving about. This occurs because there are no cues towards any distance or location into a dark room. This notion of perceiving movement is called the Autokinetic phenomenon. Sherif believed that this situation can be used to study how social norms emerge. The reason why he said that was because the way in which people perceive light to be moving from a particular distance differs from person to person. Group norms tend to emerge as the influence of one another starts to converge when asked to report how one perceives light to be doing. Now if these same individuals are placed in the same setting but alone, they tend to hold consistent estimates about the light's movement due to the previously formed group norm. This also suggests that there is an effect of group norms over what the participants in the study truly believe and what they really do. Even when they are no longer a part of the group, they still believe to follow the group norm. These findings help explain why social norms develop in many situations, specifically the ones which are ambiguous. Humans have a strong desire to be correct, that is, by behaving in an appropriate manner, social norms are the one which helps us attain that goal. Adhering to social

norms is one of the foundations of social norms while the desire of being accepted by others is another. Both of these factors together ensure social influence to be a powerful force, the one affecting human behavior strongly.

3.2.4 Factors Affecting Conformity

Research suggests that there are many factors that play a role in determining the basis on which individuals resist conformity or defer from the pressure of conformity.

Cohesiveness and Conformity:

We will be discussing how cohesiveness has an impact on conformity. Cohesiveness with respect to conformity can be defined as the degree of attraction felt by an individual toward an influencing group.

Groups with like attitudes are more cohesive than groups with unlike attitudes, successful groups are more cohesive than unsuccessful groups, and groups with clear paths to goals are more cohesive than groups lacking clear paths.

According to a finding when cohesiveness or attraction is high, pressures toward conformity are magnified. This is the fundamental reason why most people are more willing to accept social influence from friends or people they admire than from others.

For example: when students are assigned to groups to work together over a project, initially there may be disagreements but as they spend time sharing and exchanging their views we may notice less of disagreements as compared to agreements solely because of cohesiveness i.e., degree of attraction with the group of friends working on the same project.

Conformity and Group Size:

Group size has significant effects on the tendency to conform that is the size of the influencing group. If a number of group members holding the same opinion is large i.e., Group size is large then we are likely to conform to the opinion held by the group.

However, there is an interesting finding which says that conformity increases with group size up to about three members, but then seems to level off. A possibility for these findings may be that as the subjects conclude group members not expressing individual views are actually working together to influence them. When too many people agree, therefore, this may be perceived as a signal and hence they tend to be cautious while conforming.

Descriptive and Injunctive norms:

Descriptive norms are ones that indicate what most people do in a given situation. Here the behavior is influenced by informing us about what behavior is generally seen as effective or adaptive in that situation. For

example, putting your phone over silent mode before entering the cinema hall.

In contrast, injunctive norms specify what ought to be done- what is an approved or disapproved behavior in each situation. They prevent us from indulging in antisocial behaviours. For example, an instruction displayed on the bus “do not spit on the road”. However, people may often disobey these norms like spitting on the road, the question that arises next is, how do injunctive norms influence behavior and when conditions in which will it be obeyed? Normative focus theory seems to answer this question by stating that behavior will be influenced by norms only to the extent to which they are significant or relevant to those involved at the time when behavior occurs. In contrast, we hardly tend to think about them when they are irrelevant or do not apply to us, during these times the effects that they have on us are irrelevant or non-existent.

Social norms: Normative Behavior and Automacy

We often engage into practicing social norms, like putting the phone on silent when in a hospital or raising the volume of the phone while you're at a stadium. By doing this you are simply displaying what social norms are. These are the norms that guide behavior in a certain environment or situation. The question here is about whether we must be aware if we are supposed to follow these norms that influence behavior? Research indicates that this awareness may not be necessary. In contrast, activation of norms can also take place automatically without one consciously thinking about it and when they are present, they can affect one's overt actions too. Illustration of these mentioned effects and those powerful effects of social norms have been made by research.

3.2.5 Basis of Conformity: Choosing to ‘Go Along’

Several factors determine if people conform and if they do then to what extent the conformity occurs. Conformity being an important fact of social life, we usually conform to norms of the society or groups most of the time instead of resisting them. We conform for two following reasons

1. The need possessed by all human beings i.e., The desire to be liked or accepted by others and
2. The desire to be right – having an accurate understanding about the social world

Here are a few of the tactics to get people to conform to our opinions, decisions.

Normative Social Influence: The Desire to be Liked

We like to be liked by others and influence others; this desire makes us fall prey to conformity. We often behave in ways that are similar to others or in a manner that they want us to behave like in order to be liked. It is one of the most successful tactics, by making conscious efforts to appear to be as similar to others as possible. We in any way conform to others

behaviours or expectations. This form of conformity is known as normative social influence, since to meet others expectations we alter our behaviours.

Informational Social Influence: The Desire to Be Right

What do we usually do when we want to know our weight? Simply, step onto a scale. But how can one establish their social or political views? There are no physical measures to answer these questions. Yet there is a human tendency to be correct about these too. The solution to this immeasurable problem is to refer to what others do and imitate the same behavior. We may do so by making use of others opinions and actions as a guide to their own behavior. Being reliant on others is often a powerful source leading to the tendency to conform. Based on other people's opinions and actions we tend to define our social reality and use them as guides for our own opinions and actions. This tendency is called as Informational Social Influence because it is dependent over others as a means of information about various aspects of social world. Frequently we engage in conforming with others views, judgements or behaviours as doing so makes us feel assured of doing the 'right' thing. Our social reality is defined by others' actions and opinions. We tend to conform with others as we depend on them as a source of information about several aspects of the social world. Evidence suggests informational social influence is a powerful source of conformity since our motivation to be correct is very strong. Research suggests that effects of social influence are extremely powerful in situations when we are uncertain about the correctness of some fact as such effects often tend to encourage negative behaviours - the one with social effects.

3.2.6 Downside of Conformity: Why Sometimes, We Choose Not to Go Along

Asch's research indicated that people most of the time feel that they are wrong and others are right, as people conform without thinking much. For these people, conforming to others poses only a temporary dilemma, at most.

Tendency to adhere to social norms and follow them may also produce positive effects. Most of the time most people comply with the social norms and introduce a huge measure of predictability into social relations. By knowing how we and others are expected to behave and proceed on the assumption that our expectations are met. People stop their cars on seeing the right light at the signal indicating conformity over a socially made norm. But there is a downside to conformity as well. Recent research suggests one's tendency to conform and the pressures to conform may sometimes lead to harmful effects. Firstly, considering the strong tendencies by which people tend to conform to gender norms. These display how women and men are supposed to behave generally in ways that are consistent with their social beliefs. Tendency of conforming to norms may also produce negative effects. They may draw limits for career related aspirations and opportunities for males and females, especially

those of females. For instance, depending on the acceptance of the gender norms women may feel that they aren't suited for careers in mathematics or physical science and may even conclude that they may be unable to make good leaders in varying contexts. Recent research indicates that personal happiness can be influenced by having negative effects of conformity towards gender norms.

However, for many people, doing what others are doing and deciding to yield to group pressure is not so simple but is a more complex task. These individuals follow an opinion or behavior followed by the group because they do not want to differ from their group at the same time having known that their judgement is correct. Hence behaving in ways that are inconsistent with that of their own beliefs i.e., only to adhere to their group.

Recent findings suggest that one may engage into a tendency to alter their perception of a situation so as to conform or rather provide justification for his decision so as to follow a group's or other's decision or opinion.

According to several studies, changes in the way we perceive facts that make justification available for conformity are found to be the reason why people decide to conform.

3.2.7 Why do we sometimes not conform?

The ability of an individual to resist powerful pressures toward conformity is beneficial to understand. Conformity has many negative effects; hence it may not always be beneficial to conform. Research findings point to two key factors underlying this process.

Firstly, most of them have a desire to maintain their uniqueness or individuality. Even after tending to be like others. It may still not go to the extent that one loses their personal identity. Most of us possess a desire for individuation-for being differentiated from others.

Secondly, many people have a desire to have control on the events happening in their lives. This behavior of conformity grows a feeling of being driven by external factors having little or no control of your own to your life events, which may be threatening. Hence, choosing to resist group pressures. Most people want to believe that they can determine what happens to them and yielding to social pressure sometimes go against this desire. Norms encouraging individualism suggest that rules of social life tell individuals what they ought to do in a particular situation. Such norms in most situations suggest that people should go along and do what most of the others do. Times in which these norms do not happen to go along or go opposite to norms of a specific group, one may choose to do what they want. The question here is, about the kind of groups adopting these norms? Namely, those who are looking to bring in social change and the ones who place emphasis upon individual choices and preferences. These are called individualist following their set norms. Research suggests that following these norms often lead to people referring to themselves as individualists, i.e., people who don't usually go with what is otherwise

typical while having an acceptance towards those who display an unusual or individualistic behavior. In short, norms can reduce as well as increase conformity. There are various factors that lead to the tendency to conform. The basis on which we conform is based on the strength of various factors and an interplay between them conformity along with other patterns may also tend to emerge among them.

Are there any differences in the tendency of men and women to Conform?

Let's take in consideration the following statement by Queen Victoria of England, one amongst the most powerful rulers in history: "We women are not made for governing—and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations . . ." (Letter dated February 3, 1852). These and many other types of such quotations suggest that women dislike to take the charge, they would rather prefer to follow than to lead. This idea instead is suggestive of the fact that women seem to be more conforming than men. In the light of informal evidence for this view, for people who accept it, point towards the fact that generally women seem to be more likely than men to agree to and try the latest fashions in hairstyles and clothing. But however, that does not lead to an increase in their likelihood to conform in general. Early literature on conformity suggests that they are, however, recently along with the emerging research there seems to be a different conclusion. For instance, in a meta-analysis of over 145 various studies with more than 20,000 people participating in it, indicated that there comes a very minute difference between women and men, with women to be slightly more socially influenced than men. Hence, if gender difference was to be believed, it would have been much smaller than what it was widely believed at once. Furthermore, when these differences were studied, it was conducted with the specific question as to 'when' is it observed. To which it appears that influence for both the genders comes easily when they are not certain about how they have to behave or when there is a doubt regarding the correctness of their judgments. A very careful study of these conducted studies indicated that the situations and materials used were the kinds that had more familiarity to men than to women. Which resulted in men being more certain for how to behave hence showing less conformity. Post direct evidence for this reasoning was obtained which explained that when men and women were given situations or materials to which both were familiar, differences between them disappeared in terms of conformity. When we turn to the 'why', it seems that gender differences might also involve differences in terms of the status between men and women. Not only in the past but also today it has been observed that still in many societies' men hold jobs and positions with higher status than do women.

There is a link between susceptibility to social influence and status: conformity is higher when status is lower. Considering if gender differences in conformity exist it can be linked to social factors such as differences in gender roles and status and not into any internal or basic difference between the two genders. Those factors (women's status for instance) are changing certainly. In all, women in general are unlikely to

be susceptible to pressures of conformity than men. Rather the difference between the two genders is very tiny. These differences disappear when factors like one's social status and confidence in one's own judgment is built in.

3.2.8 Minority influence

We have often come across this fact where minorities do influence the majority on many occasions. As we noted earlier, individuals often resist group pressure. Small minorities can raise their voice and refuse to go along. Yet there is more going on in such situations than just opposition; in addition, there are instances wherein such people—minorities within their groups—actually turn the tables on the majority and exert rather than merely get influenced socially.

Knowing what makes them successful is an interesting process. Research suggests that they are most likely to succeed under certain conditions, discussed below:

Firstly, consistency in opposition to majority opinions amongst the members of such minority groups. If the sign of yielding to the majority view is shown, their impact reduces.

Secondly, avoidance of members of minority groups appeared as rigid and dogmatic. A minority merely repeating the same position repeatedly is not as persuasive as the one that demonstrates the degree of flexibility.

Thirdly, the importance of the general social context in which a minority operates. If a minority argues for a position that is consistent with current social trends (e.g., conservative views at a time of growing conservatism), the chances of it influencing the majority are greater than if it argues for a position that is out of step with such trend.

3.3 What research tells us about how much we really conform?

Many times, conformity may hold a negative sound than others may get along with the crowd but going along with the crowd is not what we think of ourselves as doing. According to the evidence it is suggested that we perhaps think we are more independent than we really are. But, conformity is a fact of social life. We tend to follow what others do, because doing so makes us feel more comfortable while we are similar to others whom we value than when we act differently from them. Even if we view ourselves standing out of the crowd, it may be a self-enhancing illusion. It appears that although we show conformity in many contexts—we underestimate the extent to which we are influenced by others' actions.

Check your progress

1. Role of social influence in changing others' behavior.
2. Definition of conformity.

3. Do social norms influence our behavior? Elaborate your answer with suitable examples.
4. Write a note on Conformity and Group Size.
5. Discuss if there is a difference between men and women when it comes to conforming to others.

3.4 Let's Sum up

Social influence is a common part of life, where people produce changes in others in many ways including their attitude, behavior or beliefs. Most of the time people behave according to the social norms, showing their strong tendencies towards conformity.

Conformity is doing what you ought to do in an expected situation. It is the pressure to behave consistently with regard to what one must or should be doing. For which there are social norms set to understand these subtle effects over one's behavior.

Conformity is a fact of most of our lives, happening in various ways, simply by imitating what others do. Are we able to recognize how influenced we're in this process? Obviously not. Researchers call this term an introspection illusion, where conformity takes place unconsciously by us being more likely to escape the process of introspecting ourselves. We as humans, tend to display conformity in many areas but underestimated the extent to which we were influenced by others.

Social pressure, a component of conformity, was first studied by Solomon Asch. His classic research indicated that when placed in a unanimous group, people yield out of social pressure. As Sherif pointed out, the development of social norms and the intensity of social influence after the emergence of these norms plays an important role in conformity. Since humans have a strong desire to be right, by behaving in an appropriate manner, social norms are the one which help in attaining that goal. Hence to be accepted by others, one would want to adhere to these social norms.

There are many factors to determine the extent to which conformity takes place. It includes cohesiveness - the amount of attraction felt by people towards some group or the group size and the kind of social norm operating in that situation, namely, descriptive or injunctive. Our behavior is likely to get influenced by these norms when they are relevant to us. We tend to conform due to two important motives, first, the desire to be right or accurate and second, desire to be liked by others. It also includes confirming due to the effect on the group size. Meaning, an increase in the number of group members holding the same opinion, would indicate the likeliness of an individual to go along with the decision of that group. However, it has also been noted that conformity may increase only when the size of the group is about three, but may level off if the size of the group may increase.

There are two types manifested in two distinct types of social influence, descriptive and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms are the ones which

indicate what most people usually do in a given situation, while the behavior over here is generally influenced by informing us regarding what is effective in a given situation. Injunctive norms on the other hand are the norms which specify what ought to be done - what behavior would be approved or disapproved in a given situation. Because of these norms we don't generally engage in antisocial behaviours.

We may also sometimes engage into practicing social norms which act as a guide to our behavior in various situations and environments.

We often choose to go along with others based on several factors. Since we know people tend to conform to others, the extent to which they conform varies on various factors. People often conform either because there is a desire to be liked by others and the desire to be right are the two factors that lead to conformity. Normative social influence being the desire to be liked often makes people fall prey to conformity. People try to appear similar to others to be able to be liked by them. There is a conscious effort to meet others expectations by altering one's own behavior. Informational social influence being the desire to be right is another factor which often makes people fall prey to conformity. Humans have a tendency to be correct. We often behave in ways that others behave by assuming that their behavior is right, hence by relying on others as a means of information for various aspects of the social world.

There are situations in which people may not choose to go along. There are a number of factors that lead people to not go along, in other words, they encourage nonconformity with a group. The effect of influence is pervasive and powerful and tends to get magnified in conditions where there is uncertainty about the correctness of our own judgments. People, according to Asch's research, often tend to feel that they themselves are wrong while others are right. Conforming may generate positive as well as negative effects. Most of the time people comply with social norms as it predicts greatly towards social relations. However, there is a downside too, like the effects of conforming to gender norms which display how men and women are supposed to behave in ways consistent with their social beliefs. Also, doing what others are doing may not be very simple but a complex task. People may behave in ways inconsistent with their own beliefs just so that they can be a part amongst the decisions of the group by complying with them. Hence, people decide to conform because of the way they perceive facts that make justification available for conformity.

These effects can be reduced by several conditions like having high power, status and desire to be unique. While resisting to conform may also lend into benefits, as they are perceived to have higher status than those who conform. One can also maintain their uniqueness or individuality by resisting to conform. Showing the tendency to be like others may not necessarily mean that one may lose their personal identity. Secondly, people may have a tendency to control events happening in their lives, by not letting themselves get driven by external factors related to life events.

Conformity and its effects are so strong that they can induce good people to perform bad deeds.

Minority is also an influence which is a part of conformity. Minorities, on many occasions, influence the majority. There are certain reasons why they appear to be successful. Namely, consistency in opposition to majority opinions amongst the members of minority groups. Second, avoiding the members that appear to be dogmatic and rigid. Thirdly, the importance of the way minorities operate in a general social context.

3.5 Questions

1. Explain the research done by Asch on conformity.
2. Discuss the various factors that influence conformity.
3.
 - a. Describe in brief descriptive and injunctive Norms.
 - b. What is normative social influence? Explain in brief.
4. Why sometimes we choose not to go along? Elaborate your answer with suitable examples.
5. Write short notes on
 - a. The minority influence
 - b. Basis of Conformity
 - c. Social pressure
 - d. Informational Social Influence

3.6 References

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SOCIAL INFLUENCE: CHANGING OTHERS BEHAVIOUR - II

Unit Structure :

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Compliance
 - 4.2.1 Understanding the underlying Principles of compliance.
 - 4.2.2 Understanding tactics of compliance work.
- 4.3 Obedience
 - 4.3.1 Obedience in the laboratory
 - 4.3.2 Understanding Occurrence of Obedient behaviour: Effects of Destructive Obedience
 - 4.3.3 Unintentional Social Influence
- 4.4 Resisting the Effectiveness of Destructive Obedience
- 4.5 What research tells us about using scarcity to gain compliance?
- 4.6 Let's Sum up
- 4.7 Questions
- 4.8 References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- Understanding compliance.
- Learning about principles of compliance.
- Recognizing the tactics employed to achieve compliance from others.
- Understanding Obedience behavior.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We spoke about one of the social influences, social conformity in the previous unit. Regarding why people conform, what makes them do so and why do they usually get along and as well choose not to get along with the groups they belong to. Moving forward, as discussed during the beginning of this module, in this unit we will learn about other two forms of social influences. Namely, Compliance and Obedience.

4.2 COMPLIANCE

Imagine that you wanted someone to do something for you; what would you do to get this person to agree with you? If you ponder upon it, you would find many ways of getting your work done or making the other person say 'yes' to you. What are you doing here? You are simply gaining

compliance by using various tactics. This process is nothing but how to get someone to comply with your requests.

Compliance being one of the direct forms of social influence, occurs in situations, especially where alteration of behavior takes place in response to direct requests from others.

4.2.1 Understanding the underlying Principles of compliance.

A well-known Social Psychologist Robert Cialdini studied Compliance professionals and found that they were the ones whose success depends on their ability to get others to say “yes”. These people include salespeople, advertisers, political lobbyists, fundraisers, etc.

Cialdini found six basic principles used by professionals to seek compliance.

- I. Friendship or Liking:**
It is more likely for people to comply with the requests of persons whom they like or those who are friendly to them. Hence by getting others to like someone or develop friendship may induce compliance.
- II. Commitment or Consistency:**
People usually behave in a consistent way when it comes to a view or a position that they are committed to. Hence compliance can be induced by increasing one’s commitment to a given position or a point of view.
- III. Scarcity:**
Things that are scarce and limited are usually liked and valued by others. Hence requests that try to emphasise that ‘opportunities are limited’ and should be grabbed quickly are the ones to which people comply the most.
- IV. Reciprocity:**
Generally, we are willing to comply with those who have previously provided us a concession or a favour than the ones who don’t.
- V. Social Validation:**
People have the desire to be correct or to be somewhat like others. One of the ways to be similar to others is to think or act the way others do. According to this phenomenon we are more likely to comply with a request for some action if that action is consistent with what we believe people similar to ourselves are doing (thinking).

4.2.2 Understanding Tactics of Compliance at Work

There are many ways to get others to agree to what we want. Evidence suggests that these techniques are often successful. Research by Flynn and lake stated that we tend to underestimate its effectiveness, due to the fact

that people making requests have a focus on the costs of saying 'yes' and the discomfort and time it may cause if the target person complies. While those at the receiving side of such requests focus on the social cost of saying 'no'. In other words, winning compliance is more complex than one may think, but it may also be easier than what one may think.

Compliance techniques are the ones which are used mainly to get people to say yes to us. There are various principles involving techniques adopted to do so.

Principle of Friendship/Liking

While we might have experienced ourselves doing things for the ones we like or are friends with, it is one of the methods of achieving compliance which we saw in detail in the previous module where we discussed managing and presenting ourselves favourably towards others.

Tactics on the basis of Liking or Friendship: Ingratiation

As we have come across numerous techniques for increasing the likeliness of compliance through liking as seen in the previous module by Impression management i.e., different procedures to make a positive/good impression over others. While it can be viewed as being an end in itself, the techniques of impression management are frequently used for the purpose of ingratiation i.e., the process of getting others to like us in order to make them more receptive and willing to agree to our requests. Coming forward to the techniques of ingratiation that work best – existing studies and their review display that flattery also called as the process of praising others in some specific manner, works the best. Another is called self-promotion – the process of telling others about one's past accomplishments or positive characteristics (for instance, I am very open-minded or I'm very helpful). Other techniques that seemingly work to increase the likeliness of compliance are that of enhancing one's own physical appearance, exhibiting many positive non-verbal cues, and doing trivial favours for the target people. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is sufficient to conclude that many of these techniques are implied for the purpose of managing impressions and are also successful to increase compliance. Furthermore, the ways through which one can increase others willingness to like us – elevating the chances to get others to like us based upon the requests we make consists of something called incidental similarity – which calls attention to slightly surprising and minute similarities between ourselves and them. In many recent studies, it has been found that research participants were more probable to give into small requests (like doing charity) from strangers who appeared to have the same first name or birthday same as that of the requester than when it was not similar to them in these ways. Seemingly, these small forms of similarities work to enhance feeling of affiliation or liking with the requester increasing the tendency to comply with a person's requests.

Principle of Consistency or Commitment

Following the principles of Consistency or Commitment the foot in the door technique involves agreeing to one's small request eventually leading to increase the likelihood of agreeing to the next, larger request and lowball procedure where once the individual agrees to the initial request, there's an increase in the original terms, tricking into getting the person agree for more than what they intended.

Tactics on the basis of Consistency or Commitment: The Foot-in-the-Door and the Lowball technique

Have you ever noticed when you visit a food court at a shopping mall you get approached by people offering free samples of food? If yes, have you ever thought of why they do this? The answer to this is not very complicated: They already know that once you accept their small, free gift, you will eventually be willing to buy something from their stall. This basic idea behind this approach to gain compliance is called the foot-in-the-door technique. This technique basically involves getting people to agree to their small initial request of a free sample followed by making a larger request – the desired one. Results of many studies indicate this technique to work – by succeeding to increase compliance. The most obvious question to which we may get stuck on would be as why is this the case? Since this technique relies on the principle of consistency: where once saying yes small requests makes us more likely to yes to larger and subsequent ones, as refusing to these may not be consistent with our previous behaviour. For instance, imagine borrowing your friends notes at school since the commencement of the semester, you may begin by requesting notes for one lecture. After copying those, you may eventually come up with a larger request of borrowing notes for all other classes. At this point, if your friend is compliant to you, which s/he is more likely to be because refusing to your request may be inconsistent with their initial yes. The foot-in-the-door technique is not a technique alone based upon the principle of commitment/consistency. Another technique which falls under the same principle is that of a lowball procedure. This technique is often implied by automobile sales-man, wherein a very good deal is offered to a customer and after its acceptance by the customer, something happens which causes the salesperson to alter the deal and make it less profitable for the customer. For instance, the salesmen may reject the deal he offered, the most likely response of a rational customer would be to walk away. Given these circumstances, yet the customers often agree to the alterations and the changes made in the deal and accept the less desirable and advantageous arrangement. During such instances, the commitment made initially makes it more difficult for the customers to say no, even when the conditions in which they had agreed to say yes in the first place have not been the same.

Evidence for the importance of an initial commitment in the success for the lowball technique has been provided by research. In this research, the researchers called students living in hotels and asked them if they would want to contribute for a scholarship worth \$5 for underprivileged students.

In the lowball technique condition, it was indicated by the researchers that students who contributed for the scholarship would receive a free coupon for smoothie at a local juice bar. If the participant had agreed to donate, they were told to the participants that they had run out of coupons and couldn't offer them that incentive. Researchers then asked if they still wanted to contribute. In another condition (interrupt condition), researchers, before making the initial request to the participants to which they could answer yes or no, interrupted them and indicated to them that there were no more coupons for people who participated for donation. In other words, this was similar to the lowball condition, except where participants had no chance to make an initial commitment to donate the funds. Finally, during the third (control) condition, it was asked by the students to donate \$5 with no mention regarding the free drink. Results showed that to make a donation, more people were likely to agree to the low-ball condition than in either of the other two conditions. These following results indicate that lowball procedure does rely on the principle of commitment but only when individuals make an initial public commitment when they say yes to their initial offer – does it or does it not work? By making an initial commitment, participants feel compelled to stick to the decision they make even though the conditions that lead them to agree to it in the first place may no longer exist.

Principle of Reciprocity

Following the principle of reciprocity, the door in the face involves refusing to a larger request leading to an increase in the likelihood of agreeing to a second smaller request and that's not all techniques where an initial significant request is placed and prior to the individual giving a response to it, an immediate smaller request is made.

Tactics on the basis of Reciprocity: The Door-in-the Face and the “That’s-Not-All” Approach

We all may know by now; reciprocity is a very generic rule of social life: we usually ‘treat unto others as they have done unto us.’ If we see that they’ve done a favour to us, we may feel obliged to do one for them in return. At the same time, many people may view this phenomenon to be fair and just, the principle of reciprocity also provides a basis for many techniques for gaining compliance. One of these is the exact opposite of the foot-in-the-door technique. Whereas, instead of starting with a small request and then rising up to a larger one, people rather seek compliance by starting with one very large request and then as it gets rejected, they shift on to a smaller request – which they desired for. This technique is called the door-in-the-face technique (since the refusal to first request seems like a door slam on the face of the requester), and numerous studies indicate the effectiveness of this technique. For instance, in one well known experiment, researchers asked college students to stop on the street and presented them with a huge request asking if they could serve as juvenile counsellors for 2 hours per week, for next 2 years without being paid. As we all can guess, no one agreed to this request. When researchers scaled down their request to a much smaller one – asking if they could

take a group of juvenile delinquents in a 2-hour trip to the zoo – to which 50% of the participants agreed. In contrast, about less than 17% from those in the control group gave into their smaller request when it was presented first rather than after the larger request. It has been found recently that this tactic works over the internet and also in face to face situations. In one of the researches, the researcher had set up a website to help children who were the victims of mines during the war zones. About 3600 and more people were reached out and invited to visit the site out of which 1607 actually did. In which, once they received either a very large request (door-in-the-face) asking if they would want to volunteer 2 to 3 hours per week for the next 6 months to raise awareness of the problem? In contrast, those in the control group were invited to view a page where they could make a donation for helping those children. It was expected that only a few individuals would give in with a large request – where only two of them did. Here the main question was, would people who received and then refused to the first initial request begin the process of making a donation by visiting the website? Results displayed that those who were approached with the door in the face technique had a higher percentage than the control group who visited the donation page and clicked over the link to make a donation. Hence, clearly, this tactic seems to work in cyberspace and also in person. A related technique for obtaining complaints is called that's-not-all technique. In this technique, an initial request is first followed, right before the target person can make a decision of yes or no, the requester, by something sweetens the deal – an incentive which is not very big. For instance, reducing the price of the product, giving away something additional for the same price. Another example could be of the television commercials which display various products frequently offering something additional to induce viewers to make a call and place an order – for instance a free recipe book or a free container. Several studies indicate their informal observations suggesting that the that's-not-all technique really works. Why does it happen? One of the possibilities can be because this tactic is based on the principle of reciprocity where people at the other end of receiving in this approach view the added additional product as a concession, leading to making the obligation of concession to themselves resulting in making them more likely to say yes.

Principle of Scarcity

Following the principle of scarcity, playing hard to get involves suggesting a person about the scarcity of an object and the deadline technique where the person is told that they have a limited time to gain advantage to obtain some offer.

Tactics on the basis of Scarcity: Playing Hard to Get and the Fast-Approaching-Deadline Technique

One of the general rules of life is that things which are rare, scarce or difficult to get are observed to be more valuable than those which are in abundance or easy to obtain. Because of which we often are very much willing to spend more effort or out in greater expenses to get those things

or outcomes which are rare as compared to those which are in abundance of supply. This technique serves as a foundation to many other techniques to obtain compliance. One of the most common of which is playing hard to get – a tactic used often in the area of romance. It involves actions by the individual who uses this technique implying that they have very minute interest directed to the target individual – one towards whom they are playing hard to get. For instance, an individual who's trying to play hard might spill some hints to signal their potential partner or the target individual – displaying that the target has a lot of competition and rivals. This technique can create the flames of passion in people who are at the receiving end, once it starts to work. This technique is not limited to romance and dating but also can be implied at the jobs during interviews when research was conducted. It was also observed that this technique is used by job candidates to elevate their attractiveness towards potential employers, hence increasing the likelihood that those employees receive an offer from that job. People who make use of this technique let the potential employer know about having other offers while making sure that they are even a very desirable employee. In fact, research states the validity of this technique often to be working well.

A similar procedure based on the fact of what is scarce is called 'curtail principle' and is frequently implied in department stores. Ads which use deadline techniques claiming a special sale ending on a certain date claiming that prices post that will rise, can be one of the examples. In many instances, the time limit is invalid. The prices do not rise even after the date of deadline, the prices may further decline if the merchandise doesn't get sold. Yet many people who read such ads hurry down to the shop believing that it is a great opportunity hence shouldn't be missed out. So, whenever you come across an offer suggesting that the 'hurry up, 'the clock is ticking' which may soon run out, be cautious: you might be the target for them to boost their sales. In sum, there are many various techniques for gaining compliance-to change others behaviours in the way we desire. Also, it has to be kept in mind that such efforts work both ways: while we try to influence others, in turn they often attempt to influence us. Thus it'd always be wise to remember Eric Hoffer's words stating that "It would be difficult to exaggerate the degree to which we are influenced by those we influence."

Symbolic Social Influence: How Influence Takes Place Even During the Absence of Influencers

People by making use of several techniques get us to say or do or think what they want, not surprisingly but leading to influence us in their presence. However, growing evidence implies that we are influenced by others not only during their presence but also during their absence and are not trying to change our thoughts or behaviours. Even though this evidence is new, its basic idea isn't. In fact writings from the first textbook of social psychology defined influence as "the ways in which the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, *imagined*, or *implied presence of others*." Seemingly effects generated by others are not as we do. Our mental representations place the powerful

ability to have an impact over what others prefer or want, our relationship with them, what we think about how they would evaluate us or our current actions; appears to be influenced even when we aren't consciously aware about their occurrence. For instance, one of the well-known studies found that research ideas of graduates were evaluated negatively after being exposed subtly to the face of their frowning department chair. In short, the face of the chair was displayed for such a short span of time that graduates weren't aware of having seen him. Still his negative facial expressions influenced significant effects over their evaluations of their own work.

The most likely question that strikes next is about how our mental representations of others influence our thought and behavior? There seems to be two mechanisms involved in this process where both may consist of goals (even if they are unaware of them) they may trigger relational schemas – mental representations of those with whom we have relationships wherein the goals in relation to them may also get activated. For instance, if we think of our school the goal of scoring well may get triggered or if we think of our mother the goal of making them proud of us may get triggered. These goals affect our behavior in turn, our thoughts about us and evaluations of others by us. For instance, if the goal of being fit triggers us to work out or if the goal of being physically attractive triggers us, we may just refuse sweets when offered.

Secondly, the person's goals with which he is associated can be triggered in the psychological presence of others regarding the goals they want us to achieve. Which in turn can have an impact on our performance on various tasks and our commitment to be able to reach these goals, amongst others things. For instance, when we have thoughts about our parents, we know that they want us to do well in our school and our commitment to this goal may have an increase and we may work harder to attain it- especially when we feel very close to them. In other words, to an extent where others are present psychologically in our thoughts, the kind of relationship we have with them, goals to achieve into these relationships or goals those people want us to achieve can be stimulated while these ideas and knowledge structures can have an impact on our behaviour. While many different studies have recently reported such effects, research conducted on this topic is especially revealing. In one such study, people at an airport were approached and asked to think either of a good friend or a co-worker. Then, they were asked to write down the initials of the person of whom they were thinking and to answer a series of questions about that person (describe his or her appearance, how long they had known this person, his or her age, etc.). Lastly, participants were asked about their willingness to help the researcher by answering a lengthy set of questions. It was predicted that those who thought about a friend would be more willing to help because thinking about a friend would trigger the goal of helping—something we often do for friends. This is precisely what happened: more people who thought about a friend than a co-worker were willing to help. It is important to note that participants were not asked to help their friend; but rather, they were asked to assist a stranger—that's the researcher. It was found that even after this procedure still the thoughts of the friend affected their current behavior. Findings such as these, and

those reported in a growing number of other studies, suggest that one can be strongly influenced by others when they are not physically present in the situation and trying to affect us, as long as they are psychologically present (in thoughts of us).

Check your progress

1. Define compliance. How does it work?
2. Write a detailed note on liking.
3. Why do people go with compliance? Elaborate your answer with suitable examples.

4.3 OBEDIENCE

Obedience being the most extreme forms of social influence occurs in situations where people alter their behavior in response to direct commands from others. People who usually issue such commands possess means of enforcing them. Obedience usually occurs in setups like offices, military, police systems on a regular basis.

4.3.1 Obedience in the laboratory

Stanley Milgram in one of his pioneering studies on obedience wanted to determine whether individuals would follow experimenter's commands of inflicting pain and suffering on another person who was an innocent victim. The task of the participants involved delivering shocks to another person each time they made an error in a simple learning task, with the increasing number of errors the intensity of shocks went on increasing from 15 volts to 450 volts. However, in reality the accomplice (the learners) never received any shocks. The results of this study showed that the participants followed the experimenter's commands of inflicting pain by not opposing them obediently. Even after denying the experimenter's commands, when the participants were ordered to follow them, they came under its pressure and continued to obey. though this research went controversial as it had violated its ethics, because of which strict guidelines in psychology were made to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

4.3.2 Understanding Occurrence of Obedience behavior

Why were subjects in various experiments- and many persons in tragic situations outside the laboratory willing to give in to this powerful form of social influence? Why such a form of obedience?

Following factors mentioned play a role in it:

1. Transfer of responsibility is the underlying phenomenon in many life situations. "I was only carrying out orders" is the defence mechanism many offer after obeying cruel or harsh paths. In view of this fact, unsurprisingly many tend to obey; as they are not held responsible for their actions.

2. Persons in authority mostly possess signs of their status or visible badges. These consist of special uniforms, insignia, titles, and similar symbols. After being faced with such obvious reminders regarding who is in charge, most people find it difficult to resist compliance.
3. Initially the commands or the requests made are for a mild action but later it increases with expectations to more extreme and dangerous behaviours. In other words, if there is anticipation that targets of influence might resist, gradual intensification of the authority figure's orders may follow.
4. Events in many situations involving destructive obedience move very quickly: demonstrations turn into riots, or arrests turn into mass beatings-or murders-suddenly. The fast pace of such events gives participants little time for reflection: people are ordered to obey and—almost automatically, they do so.

4.3.3 Unintentional Social Influence

Social influences like conformity, compliance and obedience being distinct forms of social influences have one basic feature in common: involvement of intentional efforts by one or more people to bring change in the thoughts and behavior of other people. Even though conformity seems to differ from compliance and obedience with this respect, it involves the intention of influencing others. Furthermore, research indicates that its common to have unintentional social influence.

We will be now describing several ways in which it can and it often does occur:

1. Emotional Contagion

A very pervasive and a basic form of social influence, which occurs when one's feelings and emotions are influenced by others, even if they do not intend to affect them in this way. For example, experiencing the feeling of joy on seeing a baby laugh.

2. Symbolic Social Influence

A form of social influence which suggests that one can be strongly influenced by others while they are physically absent in a particular scene and try to affect us until they are psychologically present (in our thoughts).

3. Modelling: Learning from Observing others

A form of social influence where people learn through modelling or by observational learning. where usually we learn from observing the actions of others and then replicate the same of what they did. one other form of it is imitation, which has a negative side of it, i.e.Nobody wants to be accused of imitating others, however, it consists of all the advantages of modelling and observational learning.

4.4 RESISTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DESTRUCTIVE OBEDIENCE

As we have considered some of the factors that are responsible for the tendency of people to obey authority, here comes a related question: How can a social influence of this type be resisted? There may be several helpful strategies helpful in this aspect. First, individuals exposed to commands from the higher authority figures can be made to recall that they, not the authority figure, is responsible for the harm produced. Under such conditions, it has been observed that there is a greater reduction in the tendency to obey. Second, clear indications can be provided to individuals after some point regarding their total submission towards destructive commands is not appropriate. One of the effective procedures can be exposing individuals to the actions of the models who display disobedience - i.e., people who refuse to obey the commands of authority figures. Research findings state that introducing such models can reduce unquestioned obedience however, not always. Third, resistance to influence can be easier when the motives and expertise of these authority figures are questioned. Whether the authorities in place are in a better position to judge regarding the appropriateness of the situation? What are the motives which lay behind their command – is it due to their selfish gains or socially beneficial goals? Finally, the knowledge about the power of authority to place commands blind obedience, might be helpful in themselves.

4.5 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT USING SCARCITY TO GAIN COMPLIANCE?

We probably know from our experience that techniques for receiving compliance can succeed in many different settings. For instance, convincing someone to buy something. However, there are other contexts where these tactics are applied as well, perhaps the one which we have not thought about is while obtaining a job you want. Which might involve flattery - making positive comments about the company offering or the person interviewing. However, techniques involving scarcity may work in this context provided it is used well. For instance, you indicate that you are considering several different jobs and having been selected for one already may suggest other employers as you being an attractive candidate. Further, telling them that you have to make a decision soon can put the interviewer under pressure to say 'yes' - to offer the job, knowing that you may be unavailable soon. This principle of scarcity, based on convincing others based on what they want is scarce and hard to obtain, can be applied at a very different context namely, romance. Using the techniques of play hard to get involves making the person whom you really want as a partner to believe that you are found to be attractive by many other people, hence making it difficult for them to win your affection since there is a competition. However, this technique may not always work, sometimes, it may also discourage potential partners making it sometimes effective.

Check your progress

1. Define obedience.
2. According to you, what types of authority succeed in inducing obedience?
3. Write a detailed note on symbolic social influence.
4. Describe unintentional social influence.

4.6 LET'S SUM UP

Various tactics are used to gain compliance - getting someone to say yes to one's request. Many of these techniques are based on various techniques of compliance. The one based on the principle of consistency or commitment are, foot in the door technique and lowball procedure. While in contrast, the other based on the principle of reciprocity, door in the face and that's not all techniques. Lastly, based on the principle of scarcity, playing hard to get and deadline techniques are used.

Moving to obedience, it is a direct type of social influence where orders from one person to one or more persons are taken to do something. This was also reflected in the research conducted by Stanley Milgram. There are many factors leading to destructive obedience which include giving people a reminder about harm being produced beyond a point, about the inappropriateness of harming someone, making them realise the motives of the authority person and informing them about the research conducted in this area.

There are times when other people may influence us even when they do not intend to do so, called unintentional social influence. One being emotional contagion, where our emotions get influenced by those of others. Another is called symbolic social influence, occurring when thoughts about others influence one's thoughts or actions even when they are absent. Lastly, modelling, where learning takes place from observing others or others actions are used as a guide to one's own behavior in conditions where it is unclear of how it should have been.

4.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in detailed unintentional social influence.
2. Describe the different principles for compliance with suitable examples.
3.
 - a. Explain in brief the concept of compliance.
 - b. How do people use scarcity to gain compliance?
4. Write a note on destructive obedience with the help of the Milgram experiment.

5. Write short notes on
 - a) Tactics of compliance
 - b) Emotional contagion
 - c) Modeling
 - d) Occurrence of obedient behavior

4.8 References

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AGGRESSION: ITS NATURE, CAUSES AND CONTROL - I

Unit Structure :

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Perspectives on Aggression
 - 5.2.1 The Role of Biological Factors
 - 5.2.2 Drive Theories
 - 5.2.3 Modern Theories of Aggression
- 5.3 Causes of Aggression
 - 5.3.1 Basic Sources of Aggression: Frustration & Provocation
 - 5.3.2 Social Causes of Aggression
 - 5.3.3 Personal Causes of Aggression
 - 5.3.4 Situational Causes of Aggression
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 Questions
- 5.6 References

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand –

- The nature of aggression
- The contrasting theoretical perspectives of aggression
- Various sources and causes of aggression

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings and animals are not strangers to aggression and violence. Right from the time, mankind lived in caves to present times, aggression is part of our day-to-day life. History is witness to extreme aggression in the form of wars and atrocities to milder forms of aggression. The aggression may be committed by one person against another person (e.g. husband beating wife, a stranger attacking another person such as Jessica Lal case, etc.), by one person against many other persons (e.g. terrorist attack), by number of people against one person (e.g. mob lynching, gang rape – you may recall Nirbhaya case) or by one group of people aggressing against another group of people (e.g. gang wars, street fights, wars between two countries, etc.). Newspapers, television, and the internet are full of news about aggression and violence perpetuated in one form or the other. In spite of strides in technology and having advanced civilization with social norms of kindness and peace, the fact remains that aggression is an all too

common part of our lives and it is becoming predominant instead of reducing. It has been well documented that in terms of wars, genocides, and mass killings, the 20th century was the most violent of any century in human existence, and the 21st century is shaping up to be just as brutal.

Aggression is damaging for any society. Looking at the pervasiveness and the human cost of aggression, it becomes important for social psychologists to understand what aggression is, why it takes place and how it can be contained. In the present unit, we will be discussing the nature and causes of aggression.

Before we dwell upon the theoretical explanations of aggression, let us see what aggression is.

Social psychologists define **aggression** as *behavior that is intended to harm* another individual who does not wish to be harmed (Baron & Richardson, 1994).

The most important points in this definition are –

- a) Aggression is intentional
- b) The victim wants to avoid the harm.

The key word here is intention. The same act of hurting another person can be described as helping behavior or aggressive behavior depending upon the intention. For example, a robber may stab a person with the intention of robbing and the victim tries to save himself, that will be an aggressive act. On the other hand, a doctor may also cut the stomach of a person with a knife with the intention of curing him of his illness (performing an operation) and the victim may be in discomfort but will not try to avoid it, that will not be considered an act of aggression. If a person accidentally harms another person, it will not be called an aggressive act. For example, in a cricket game, a bowler may bowl a bouncer ball that may hit the batsman's face, yet it can't be called an aggressive act because the bowler didn't have the intention of harming the batsman.

Aggression can take place in many forms. For instance, It may be physical aggression such as stabbing, shooting, slapping, beating, etc. It may be nonphysical aggression, e.g., verbal aggression (shouting, screaming, name calling, etc.), relational or social aggression such as gossiping, ignoring, cold shouldering, spreading rumors, bad mouthing somebody behind their backs, turning people against each other, not talking with someone or not shaking hands, bullying, discrimination on the basis of caste, color, creed, religion, nationality, etc. It may be an instrumental aggression., terrorists killing innocent people to gain publicity and to instill fear in the minds of the people. Aggression may be direct or indirect. For example, a person may aggress by directly harming a person or by harming that person's property, loved ones, tarnishing his reputation, etc. Invading others' privacy without their consent or knowledge, copyright violations are also a form of aggression.

5.2 PERSPECTIVES ON AGGRESSION

Psychologists have been trying to understand why people aggress. There have been contrasting views about it. Let us look at some of these important perspectives, starting from older ones to recent ones.

5.2.1 The Role of Biological factors

In the 19th century, one of the most popular theories pertaining to aggression was “**instinctive theory**”. This theory proposed that human beings aggress because they are programmed for violence by their basic nature. That means, we all are born with an inherent tendency or instinct to be violent. Freud was one of the strongest supporters of this argument. He believed that humans have both an instinct to live and an instinct to die (Thanatos). Aggression comes from a death wish. He believed that death instinct is initially directed at ourselves, we wish to destroy ourselves, but the life instinct counteracts the death instinct and preserves life by diverting destructive urges toward others in aggressive acts (Freud, 1917/1961). Lorenz (1966) a Nobel Prize winner ethologist agreed with Freud and believed that aggression originates from ‘fighting instinct’

Flinn, et.al. (2012) suggested that testosterone (the male sex hormone) is also responsible for aggressive behavior. They measured the testosterone levels of soccer players immediately at the end of their games. They found that players' testosterone levels increased when they won matches against strangers but these levels did not increase if they won matches against their friends or if they lost matches against the strangers.

One can argue that while defeating others is one way of getting desirable mates, another way is to win the competitions. Just winning competitions increases the testosterone, which in turn raises their desire to get desirable mates.

Griskevicius et.al.(2009) suggested from their study that even if men read a story about meeting an attractive female, their mating motivation is activated and they do become more aggressive towards other men.

However, males tend to become aggressive towards other men only when there are no females present. They do not become more aggressive in the presence of females. The reason may be that they don't want desirable females to get turned off or frightened. Banks, T. et.al. (1996) also suggested from their study that testosterone affects aggression by influencing the development of various areas of the brain that control aggressive behaviors. The hormone also affects physical development such as muscle strength, body mass, and height that influence our ability to successfully aggress. However, the studies cannot prove that testosterone causes aggression—the relationships are only correlational.

Evolutionary theory:

Darwin was the first one to say that aggression has its roots in our instincts. It helps human beings to survive and propagate their genes better. They don't aggress for the sake of pleasure or for avoiding pain. Lorenz (1966) a Nobel Prize winner ethologist agreed with Freud and Darwin both, and believed that aggression originates from '**fighting instinct**'. This fighting instinct ensures that only the strongest males can get mates and pass their genes to the next generation. Like Freud, he also believed that aggressive urges built up within us like hydraulic pressure inside a closed environment and if these forces are not released through some other activity, they will burst into aggression.

Many social psychologists did not agree with them –

- a) "instinct theory...fails to account for the variation in aggressiveness, from person to person and culture to culture" (Myers, 1995, p. 439). As mentioned before, people aggress in various forms – right from physically harming to discrimination or isolation from the social groups. The question arises how we can explain such a diverse set of individual behaviors through genetic factors. Similarly, people belonging to different cultures not only differ in their own ways of aggression but their support for aggression or confrontational response also depends upon their culture. For instance, for the same conflict situation, people in individualistic culture like America support aggressive response and those living in collectivist culture like India frown upon such aggression.
- b) Secondly, the frequency of aggressive actions too varies from one human society to another one. In some societies or communities, it is more frequent than in others. If aggression is an inherent trait then it should not vary from one community to another community.

In spite of such objections, the evolutionary perspective grew and the questions were raised about the biological factor as the basis of aggressive behavior. Psychologists found that some of the evolutionary reasons for aggression, that were valid in the past are, still relevant. For example, in the past, males had to compete with other males to get desirable mate. One way of eliminating competition was through aggression. This argument stands for modern times too. The only difference is that in the past, males had to physically aggressed against a competitor and today they have to use other non-physical, indirect methods of aggression to win the competition. Since the males who were capable of competing successfully must have secured desirable mates and transmitted their own genes to next generation, a genetically influenced tendency to compete and aggress against other males must have developed over the generations. But such tendencies to aggress were not developed against women because it would have been contrary to their goal of getting desirable mate. Females would have rejected such males as mates who would have been aggressive towards them. In fact, females tend to reject even those males who have been aggressive in public, because such aggression exposes aggressing

males as well as females associated with them to unnecessary dangers. Consequently, males have a weaker tendency to aggress against females than against other males. While males tend to aggress more towards other males than towards other females, females aggress equally against males and females. But females do not aggress as frequently as males do.

Hawley et.al. (2007) suggested that there is not much difference in aggression of male and female, but they do differ in the type of aggression expressed by each gender.

Competing with rival males and defeating them not only elevates the testosterone levels of males but it also enhances their social status. This enhanced social status of males attracts females towards them. That is why successful men display their success through external signs such as expensive cars, big houses, expensive clothes, etc. Through these symbols they are trying to say "I have won- I have defeated my rivals". Success does entice some of the women, not all. Attraction is a much more complex phenomenon than this but enhanced social status and power does attract women.

Another study conducted by Hygen et.al (2015) in Norway on hundreds of children too gave evidence of a relationship between genetic factors and aggression. They found that some children had a gene that triggered production of a particular chemical in the brain that led to high aggression, especially when these children were under high stress (e.g., child abuse or serious illness). The other children who did not have this particular gene were comparatively less aggressive because that particular chemical was not produced in their brain. However, very strangely, the children who had aggression facilitating genes became less aggressive under normal conditions/ non stress conditions. Hygen et.al. said that these results indicate that both groups (one group having aggression facilitating genes and another group not having such a gene) survive by being adaptive. The group with the gene does better in changing environments while the other group does better in the stable environment.

In the end, their study concluded that genes do play a significant role in aggressive behavior but environmental factors to influence such behavior.

5.2.2. Drive Theories

Later on, social psychologists rejected the instinct theories propagated by Freud and Lorenz. Instead, they proposed that aggression is a drive triggered by external condition. Once the aggressive drive is generated, it can lead to overt aggressive actions. These external conditions can be anything such as provocations from others or the mere presence of weapons. But those external unpleasant environmental conditions that generate frustration in a person are most likely to generate aggressive drives.

Frustration- Aggression Hypothesis:

This is one of the classic theories in social psychology. It was first formulated in 1939 by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears. The question arises what is frustration. According to this theory, frustration is an unpleasant feeling that a person experiences when anything prevents him from reaching the goals that he is seeking. This leads to arousal of a drive that has a main objective of harming someone or some object, especially the one that is perceived as the source of that frustration.

Initially the theory suggested that frustration always leads to some form of aggression, and frustration is the only cause of aggression. But later on, this assumption was criticized and this assumption got modified and it was suggested that “frustration produces instigation to a number of different types of responses, one of which is an instigation of some form of aggression”.

5.2.3 Modern Theories of Aggression

After the criticism of frustration-aggression theory, psychologists desisted from assuming that only one factor causes aggression. Instead they looked at many other areas of psychology and taking insight from them suggested that many factors jointly trigger aggression. For instance, they took inspiration from **Bandura’s (1997) Social Learning theory**. Based on this theory, they stated that human beings are not born with aggressive responses, they learn them in the same way as they learn other behaviors. They learn it either through direct experiences or by observing the behavior of others (social role models). These social role models may be live persons from their surrounding environment, characters from television, movies, novels or video games. Depending on their past experience and the cultures in which they live, they can learn –

1. different ways of harming others
2. which people or groups should be targeted for aggression
3. for which actions of others, one should retaliate
4. under which situations or context, aggressive actions would be allowed or even approved.

So, a person’s aggressive response in a specific situation will depend upon his past experience of receiving reward or punishment for such response, his attitudes, values that comes from culture. For instance, socially sanctioned aggression, depending on culture, might include rough and tumble play, hunting, police or intelligence service actions, capital punishment, or war. Socially prohibited aggression in most cultures includes criminal assault, rape, homicide, parenticide, infanticide, child abuse, domestic violence, torture, civil disturbance, and terrorism.

General Aggression Model:

Anderson & Bushman (2002) built a more elaborate model of aggression on the basis of social learning theory. It considers the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental, and biological factors on

aggression. It integrates mini theories of aggression into a single conceptual framework. GAM emphasizes three critical stages in understanding a single episodic cycle of aggression:

- (1) person and situation inputs,
- (2) present internal states (i.e., cognition, arousal, affect, including brain activity),
- (3) outcomes of appraisal and decision-making processes.

According to this model, overt aggression gets started by two factors –

A) Input variables - Input variables are categorized into two parts –

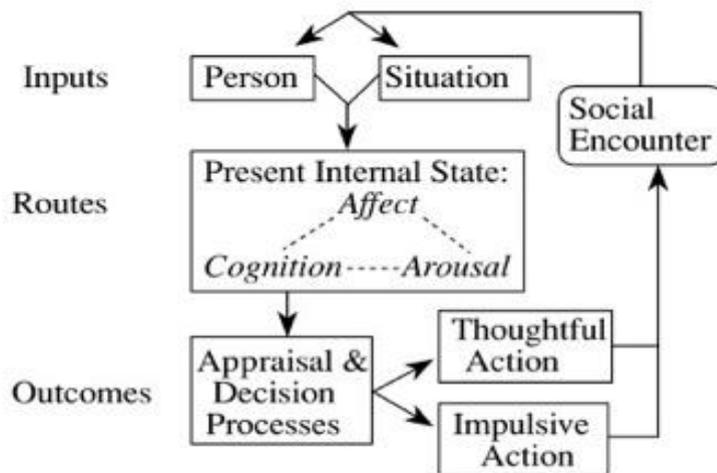
- i) Situational factors** – This includes frustration, some kind of provocation (e.g., being insulted), exposure to other aggressive people (aggressive models – real or in media), anything that causes discomfort for a person (e.g., physical pain, extremely high or low temperature, disrespectful treatment, being ignored, etc.)
- ii) Person factors** – This includes factors related to individual differences across people. Factors such as personality traits, attitudes and beliefs about violence, tendency to see hostile intentions in other’s behavior and having specific skills related to aggression are included. One of the traits related to aggression is high irritability, people may believe that it is right and acceptable to aggress and they may have skills such as knowing how to use different weapons or how to fight.

Both types of input variables together impact three basic processes –

- i) Arousal** – may increase physiological arousal or excitement
- ii) Affective States**– may generate hostile feelings and people may express them through outward signs such as angry facial expressions
- iii) Cognitions** – may trigger hostile thoughts or may bring beliefs and attitudes about aggression to mind.

These three states then get appraised as individual’s interpretation of the situation as well as the restraining factors (e.g. a child wants to aggress against another child in the class, but the presence of teacher or the size and strength of the other child may deter him), he may either restrain himself from aggressing or may indulge in impulsive behavior of overt action.

Thus, the GAM model uses a social-cognitive framework that incorporates biological, situational, and individual characteristics that intertwine and produce varying outcomes -- behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physical. See figure 1



Source: Anderson and Bushman, 2002.

Bushman and Anderson (2002) states that GAM can explain why media violence increases the aggression of a person. They explained that individuals who are exposed to high levels of aggression, either directly in terms of seeing other people aggressing or indirectly in terms of video games, tend to become more aggressive themselves. The aggressive actions are largely based on the learning, activation and application of aggression related knowledge stored in memory. This is what explained the shooting incidents in schools of America in 2000. It was found that shooters were students who habitually played and enjoyed violent video games.

Repeated exposure to aggressive stimuli like video games strengthens their knowledge structure such as attitudes, beliefs, and script relevant to aggression. These strengthened knowledge structures get activated by situational or personal variables, and consequently people get 'primed' for aggression.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss in detail biological factors triggering aggression
2. Describe in detail drive and modern theories of aggression.

5.3 CAUSES OF AGGRESSION

Now let us look at the causes of aggression. Why do people aggress not only against strangers, rivals but even against loved ones or family members? Domestic violence, child abuse, etc. are prevalent in all societies. As we saw in discussion about modern theories of aggression, aggression is influenced by not just one factor but by a combination of personal, social, cultural, and situational factors. Let us see each one of them now.

5.3.1 basic Sources of Aggression: Frustration & Provocation

Frustration

We have briefly touched upon the frustration-aggression hypothesis given by Dollard et.al. (1939). This theory in its initial version made two broad assumptions-

1. Frustration always leads to some form of aggression
2. Aggression always stems from frustration.

But these assumptions were criticized by many psychologists, saying that too much importance is given to frustration as a determinant of aggression. Individuals do not always react with aggression to frustration and frustration is not the only cause of aggression. For instance, frustration may lead to sadness, despair, depression, being motivated to try harder to achieve his goals, binge eating or withdrawing from the situation. It need not necessarily lead to aggression. There will be many other considerations that influence a person's overt aggressive actions. A person may be frustrated, but will hesitate to aggress against another person, if that person happens to be physically or socially stronger than him or there can be negative repercussions of his behavior. Similarly, if frustration is the only cause of aggression, then how do we explain the behavior of a robber who aggresses with the objective of robbing a person, a contract killer aggresses against another person for the sake of money and not because he was frustrated.

Due to this criticism, how many psychologists do not believe that frustration is the only or the most important cause of aggression. It is just one of the causes, but it can be a power determinant of aggression under certain conditions, such as illegitimate or uncertain conditions. Dill and Anderson (1995) conducted a study to show the impact of frustration due to unjustified conditions on aggression. The participants were required to learn and make an origami bird. The participants were divided into three groups, to be exposed to three different conditions – no frustration condition, unjustified frustration condition and justified frustration condition. In all groups, experimenters started giving instructions in a deliberately fast manner, on how to make the bird. When participants requested the experimenter to slow down, in non frustration condition, the experimenter apologized and slowed down. In an unjustified frustration condition, the experimenter said he wants to leave as soon as possible due to some personal reason. In justified condition, the experimenter said that the supervisor has asked him to clear the room as soon as possible. Thereafter, participants were given a questionnaire measuring their levels of aggression and a questionnaire about the competency and likeability of research staff. They were told that financial aid of the research staff depends on the scores given by the participants in this study. It was found that in unjustified frustration conditions, participants rated research staff as less able and less likable. Justified frustration group top rated research staff as less able and less likable compared to no frustration group, but

higher on both measures compared to unjustified frustration condition group. This clearly indicates that unjustified frustration triggers hostile thoughts, feelings of intense anger and people seek revenge, but not so in justified frustration.

Direct Provocation:

Mahatma Gandhi said if somebody slaps you, turn your other cheek towards him. Most of the religions in the world say that we should not retaliate when someone hurts us or annoys us. We should remain calm, but it is not so easy for a common man to do so. It has been observed that physical or verbal provocation (such as unfair criticism, sarcastic remarks, making fun of or laughing at) is the one of the strongest causes of aggression. This provocation can be in a direct or indirect manner. We retaliate with as much aggression as we have received or even more, especially when we feel that the other person has harmed us intentionally.

There are various kinds of provocations that produce very strong aggression in a person. For instance, research studies have shown that condescension, criticism, derogatory statements are some of the direct provocations.

Condescension—refers to expression of arrogance, or disdain on the part of others, patronizingly superior behavior or attitude are very powerful forms of direct provocation that triggers strong aggression. (Harris, 1993).

Criticism - is another powerful form of direct provocation to aggression. It is in the form of harsh and unjustified statements, judgments and fault findings. People find it very difficult to not get angry and retaliate in some manner either immediately or later on, especially when the criticism is directed at them as persons instead of being directed to their behavior or work. (Baron & Richardson, 1994)

Teasing – refers to derogatory statements that highlight an individual's flaws and imperfections. For instance, a fat person may be teased by being called 'Fatso'. These statements can be in sometimes playful manner (Kowalski, 2001) or comments that are intentionally offensive. Teasing can be mild, humorous remarks or can be hurtful, negative or disparaging remarks about the person or his family with the intention to reduce the reputation of a person.

Campos et.al. (2007) suggested that if a person thinks that teasing was done with hostile motives of embarrassing or annoying him, the chances are very high that he will react aggressively. On the other hand, if he thinks that teasing was due in good humor and not to hurt him, the chances of him retaliating with aggression will be less.

Griskevicius et.al. (2009) too indicated that if others' actions threaten our status or public image, it will lead to greater aggression. They took both male and female participants for their study and asked them to describe the primary reason for their recent act of aggression against another person. It was found that most of them responded that they aggressed due to

perceived damage to their status or reputation and they considered that as a threat to their self-identity.

One of the gravest concerns is the fact that when a person provokes another person, either directly or indirectly, the recipient of that provocation returns it in kind and this triggers anger in the first person and this leads to a spiral where aggression breeds aggression.

5.3.2 Social Causes of Aggression

Social Exclusion:

Social exclusion or rejection is another form of aggression that we would like to avoid. Social rejection is an unpleasant experience. It denies us the benefits of social relations and also reflects negatively on our self-image. It makes one feel disrespected or disliked. Very often, aggressive people are rejected or not included in the group because they are aggressive, but that does not prompt them to reduce their aggressiveness, instead they react more aggressively. Social rejection can lead to aggression towards the rejecters as a way of getting 'even with them'. This argument was supported by Leary et.al. (2006) and they said that the chances are very high that a person rejected/excluded by others will aggress more and this will lead to more rejection of him. This becomes a self-perpetuating vicious circle – rejection leads to aggression and more aggression leads to more rejection and isolation.

Emotional Distress: One would assume that social exclusion would lead to emotional distress and this distress may lead to irrational, pathological behaviors. It may increase anger, anxiety, depression, jealousy and sadness. Many research studies did attempt to show that emotional distress due to social exclusion leads to pathological behavior responses such as aggression. However, these studies could not confirm conclusively that emotional distress due to rejection leads to more aggression. A meta-analysis by Blackhart et.al. (2007) showed that the average effect of rejection on emotional distress was very small.

Hostile Cognitive Mindset:

Research studies do confirm that rejection does trigger cognitive structures in our minds that make us see even ambiguous or neutral actions of others as hostile. The victim of rejection thinks that aggression is very common in social interactions and it is an appropriate response (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Tremblay & Belchevski, 2004). Even evolutionary theory suggests that rejection or exclusion leads to hostile cognitive mindset or bias.

DeWall et.al. (2009) conducted a series of studies to show that rejection or social exclusion leads to hostile cognitive bias and that leads to increased aggressive behavior. In one such study, participants in their study were expected to interact with same sex partner. They manipulated social exclusion in different ways. By random assignment, participants were divided into two groups. One group of the participants were told that their

partner (actually a confederate) was unwilling to meet or interact with them. The other group of participants were told that they can't meet their partner because he had to leave the experiment early due to unavoidable reasons such as prior appointments with somebody. Thus, participants felt personally or impersonally excluded.

To find out whether this exclusion triggered hostile cognitive bias, both the groups were given the task of completing a pair of words. These pair of words contained one clearly aggressive word and one ambiguous words (e.g. 'r_ _pe' can be rape or ripe). As expected, those who were actively and personally rejected completed the words in an aggressive way much more than those in the impersonally excluded category.

In a follow up study, they took 30 participants and asked them to complete a personality test. Social rejection was manipulated through false feedback of this test. These 30 students were divided into 3 groups. One group was given the feedback that their personality test scores indicated that they would most probably end up being alone later in life (that means, they would be rejected by others), the second group was given the feedback that they would have many lasting and meaningful relationships and the third group was not given any feedback at all. After that they were given a story written by another person, whom they did not know. In the story, this stranger's actions were ambiguous, these actions could be interpreted as assertive or hostile. Participants were asked to rate their impressions of these actions. Once again, as was expected, those who were told that they are going to lead a lonely life interpreted the stranger's actions in the story as more hostile. This clearly indicated that rejection or social exclusion did create hostile cognitive bias.

To determine whether hostile cognitive bias will lead to aggression, participants were told that this stranger has applied for a research assistant's post and based on what they have read, they should rate him on his suitability for the post. They were informed that he badly needs this job. Once again it was found that those in the experimental group, who were told that they will be leading a lonely life, gave much more negative evaluation than those in the other two groups.

The research further shows that these effects occurred even when the person they evaluated was not the one who caused their social exclusion.

So, we can say that rejection hurts and causes a lot of emotional distress, but people react with aggression only if they think that others' actions are based on a hostile motive and from a desire to harm them. However, they aggress not only towards the person who has rejected them but towards others as well.

Media Violence

There has been a lot of hue and cry about exposing children and even adults to violence in the media. It is believed that watching media violence increases the aggression levels among children and adults. On the other hand, the media industry has been blaming activists for overreacting and

making accusations against the media without substantial proof. Psychologists have also studied this issue for years together, and have come to the conclusion that media violence indeed contributes to rising levels of aggression in countries where such material is viewed by large numbers (Bushman & Anderson (2009). In fact, Bushman et.al. (2015) summarized the findings of all studies related to this field and said that –

1. such material significantly increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior by the people who are exposed to it.
2. such exposure has both short-term and cumulative long-term effect on aggression
3. The magnitude of these effects is large.

That means the effects of media violence are real, long lasting and substantial. These findings have serious inferences for all countries as well as for entire mankind. Now, let us look at some of the studies that support the above-mentioned conclusions.

Bandura’s “Bobo Doll” Studies:

Bandura et.al. (1961) believed that aggression is a learned behavior and it is learned in the same way as other behaviors, that is through imitation. They conducted a short-term laboratory experiment in the 1960s to investigate if aggression can be acquired through observation and imitation. These studies are known as “Bobo Doll” studies. Young boys and girls of age 3 to 6 years were taken for the experiment. They pre-tested the children to measure their aggressive behavior. Children were divided into three groups on the basis of their level of aggression in their everyday behavior. In other words, a matched pair design was used. Then instead of using actual television programs, they constructed their own T.V. program in which, in aggressive condition, an adult model was shown as aggressing against a large inflated toy clown (Bobo doll) in an unusual manner, e.g., she sat on it, punched its nose, stuck it on the head with a toy mallet and kicked it around the room. In non-aggressive condition, the adult model was shown lovingly caressing the Bobo doll. Two groups of children were exposed to one of these programs and the third group was not exposed to any adult model. Then all the children were left in a large hall that had many toys including the Bobo doll. They were allowed to play freely for 20 minutes. During this period, their behavior was observed carefully through a one-way glass. See table 1

Table 1

		Total 72 Children		
Experimental Group Aggressive Model 24 Children		Experimental Group Non-Aggressive Model 24 Children		Control Group No Model 24 children
Male Model	Female Model	Male Model	Female Model	
6 Boys	6 Boys	6 Boys	6 Boys	
6 Girls	6 Girls	6 Girls	6 Girls	

Results showed that-

- a) 88% children who were exposed to aggressive adult models were more aggressive and hit the Bobo doll with the object in the room and those who were exposed to non-aggressive adult models did not show aggression and imitated the loving behavior towards the Bobo doll.
- b) Children who observed adults ignoring the Bobo doll also did not show aggressive behavior towards it.
- c) Girls who viewed male models displayed more physical aggression and girls who viewed female models displayed more verbal aggression.
- d) Boys displayed more physical aggression than girls after viewing either male or female models in aggressive condition.

Bandura et.al. (1961) concluded that exposure to this program had two effects on children-

1. They learnt new ways of aggressing from the program they watched.
2. They also learnt that aggression is an acceptable form of behavior.

Longitudinal Studies of Media Violence:

Lefkowitz, Huesmann, Eron, and their associates (1977) studied the television viewing habits and behavior of 875 third-grade children in a semirural county in upstate New York during the 1960's. The researchers reported that children with a preference for violent programs at age eight were more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior at age 19 and engage in serious crimes by the time they were 30 years old.

Huesmann Et.al. (1984) had similar results from their study. They studied the same participants for many years. The results showed that children who watched the more violent films or television programs turned out to be having higher levels of aggression as teenagers or adults. There were much higher chances of being arrested for violent crimes. These studies were replicated in many different countries such as Australia, Finland, Israel, Poland, and South Africa and everywhere the results were similar. This indicated that there were no cultural differences.

Moreover, it was observed that such effects were not restricted to only actual programs or films. Media violence effect results from violence in news programs, violent lyrics in popular music and by violent video games too.

Video Games:

Video games have become very popular in almost all the countries and millions of people are playing them for hours together. Many people are addicted to these games. Most of these video games have a large amount of violent content. So, it becomes imperative for psychologists to see what effect these violent video games have on the levels of aggression of human

beings. Do they produce the same effect as watching violent T.V. programs or films?

Anderson et.al.(2010) conducted a meta-analysis of all available well conducted studies on the effects of aggressive video games. They found that playing such games consistently-

- 1) increases the **aggressive cognitions** (i.e., thoughts of harming others), **aggressive affect** (i.e., feeling of hostility, anger and revenge) and **aggressive behavior**.
- 2) It also **reduces the empathy** for others and the prosocial behavior.
- 3) There are **no cultural differences** and such negative effects of video game playing occur in Eastern and Western culture equally.
- 4) Produces long term negative effects – long lasting increase in aggressive cognition, affect and behavior.
- 5) These effects can be seen in short term laboratory studies as well as in longitudinal studies.

Anderson et.al. (2010) concluded that “video games are neither inherently good nor inherently bad. But people learn. And content matters”. This indicates that video games do not increase aggression if the content of the video games is nonviolent.

Another question that intrigued the psychologists was, why are video games so popular with so many people? Some psychologists believed in the beginning that people enjoy violence and find it exciting, especially in the safe context of video games, where no harm will come to them in reality. However, later on, Przybylski et. al. (2009) showed through their study that this reasoning is not correct. They based their conclusions on Cognitive Evaluation Theory of Ryan & Deci (2007). They said that it is not the violent content that people enjoy, but the sense of **autonomy and competence** that these video games give is what makes them so popular. In other words, it is the sense of control that a player gets while playing these games, the feeling of being independent, the opportunity to experience their competence and use their skills and abilities, that gives them immense pleasure and makes playing video games so much fun.

Przybylski et. al. (2009) conducted their study with members of an Internet forum for discussion of video games. Participants were asked to measure –

- their feelings of competence and mastery while playing various games
- their enjoyment of the games, their absorption in them and their interest in purchasing a sequel of those games.

Violent content in various games was coded by the experimenters such as code 1 for no violent content, code 2 for abstract violence, code 3 for impersonal violence, code 4 for fantasy violence and code 5 for realistic violence.

Results indicated that more the satisfaction of the need for autonomy and competence provided by a particular game, more the enjoyment and absorption of the participants for that game and more the interest in purchasing a sequel of that game. But this satisfaction with the game had no relationship with the violent content of the game. This implies that popularity of the video games was not due to the content of the games but due to other factors.

Przybylski et. al. (2009) conducted a follow up study to see whether people high in aggressiveness trait prefer, enjoy and get absorbed more in violent games than in nonviolent games. The results showed that people high on aggressiveness did show preference for violent games rather than nonviolent games and those who were low in aggressiveness traits showed more preference for nonviolent games. However, when both types of games equally satisfied their need for autonomy and competence, the difference in their preference for violent or nonviolent games disappeared. This result further supported the view that the content of the game is not important for the popularity of the game. The reason behind the popularity of video games is their ability to satisfy the need for autonomy and competence of the players. If a game satisfies the need for autonomy and competence, it will be popular, irrespective of having violent or nonviolent content.

Desensitization - The Effects of Media Violence:

Anderson et.al. (2015) proposed from their study that repeated exposure to large amounts of violent content in television programs, films, video games, etc. makes an individual less sensitive to violence and its consequences. People can become more aggressive due to such desensitization. Social neuroscience perspective provides the most prominent evidence of the impact of desensitization.

Bartholow et.al.(2006) conducted a study in which participants were asked to report the extent to which they had played violent and nonviolent video games in the past. Then they were shown a series of either neutral images (such as a man on a bicycle) or violent images (e.g. a man holding a gun to the head of another persona). While they were viewing these images, the activity in their brains was recorded. This is known as event related brain potential, i.e., changes in the brain activity that occurs as certain types of information are processed. It was assumed that if participants are desensitized to violent images due to playing violent video games in the past, then the changes in their brain activity will be minimal. The results confirmed this belief. This clearly indicated that exposure to media violence produces desensitization.

It was also assumed that the degree of desensitization will predict the likelihood of aggression against other people. To test this participant were asked to participate in a competitive reaction time task in which they could decide the loudness of an unpleasant sound to be delivered to the loser of the competitive task. The results indicated once again that those who were

high in desensitization were willing to administer much louder noise than those who were low in desensitization.

On the basis of above studies, we can conclude that exposure to media violence not only increases the aggressive tendencies of a person but also reduces his emotional reactions to such events, i.e., desensitizes them. Such people see aggression as 'nothing out of the ordinary'.

The question arises that when it is well known that exposure to media violence produces such severe adverse effects then why violent content in media has not reduced or been removed. The reasons are economic rather than social or psychological. It is a sad reality that media violence sells. As long as people are ready to pay and consume such content, it will remain and dominate our media.

5.3.3 Personal Causes of Aggression

The question in front of psychologists was that if the above mentioned social factors are responsible for increased aggression then how can we explain the fact that some individuals are more aggressive than others under the same conditions. Why do these individual differences exist? They concluded that there are certain personal factors that account for these individual differences in their aggression levels. Let us see some of these personal factors that make a person more aggressive.

Hostile Attribution Bias

Hostile attributional bias is a tendency to perceive hostile intentions in others' actions. They simply assume and perceive evil intent in others' actions and react aggressively. They have an aggressive cognition such as "If they are hostile towards me, I will strike first". However, in the human population, this tendency to have hostile attribution bias, follows the normal distribution curve pattern. At one extreme end of the dimension, there are people who perceive practically everyone as hostile and on the other end of the extreme, there are people who rarely see others as hostile. But most of us, that is 68.2% fall in between these two extremes. Those who are high on hostile attribution bias perceive others' innocent actions too as hostile. They think that everyone is 'out to get them' in some way, i.e., harm them, cheat them in some way. This leads them to remain in aggressive mode all the time.

Narcissism

Narcissism is a personality trait. People having this trait have an unjustified view of themselves, an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration, troubled relationships, and a lack of empathy for others. They become aggressive when others dare to question their overblown view of themselves. In such cases, they experience narcissistic rage. They seek revenge against the 'doubters' but at the same time they also feel threatened by these doubts.

There are two parts of narcissism –

- a) **Grandiosity** – the tendency to show off and exhibit arrogance
- b) **Vulnerability** – the tendency to be bitter, complaining and being defensive.

Krizan & Johar (2015) said that only vulnerability is related to aggression. Narcissist people high in vulnerability experience rage when others question their inflated views of themselves. Their study supported this view. In their study, they measured the participants' grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as well as their tendencies to respond to conflict with others by either a direct or displaced aggression. The results showed that only vulnerability predicted aggression.

In another study, Krizan & Johar (2015) told participants that the study is about food preferences. Participants were told that their partner will be choosing whether these participants should taste a slightly bitter liquid (tea) or a very bitter liquid (bitter melon juice). Then, they were told that their partner has chosen bitter melon juice for them to taste and rate. After this, they were given the opportunity of choosing between a mild or extremely hot sauce for their partner to taste. It was observed that individuals high in vulnerable narcissism chose the extremely hot sauce for their partners more often than those low in vulnerable narcissism. This indicated that vulnerable narcissists aggressed more against a person who has provoked them. They had a strong need to punish those people who ignored their superiority. So, people with inflated egos and harboring doubts about themselves are dangerous, especially when their egos are threatened in any way. History proves that most of the tyrant dictators were vulnerable narcissists.

Gender & Aggression

Strong gender differences in aggression have been found in virtually every culture that has been studied. Violent crime statistics in every country prove that men are more aggressive than females. This data shows that men are more likely than women, to be both the aggressor as well as the victim of different forms of aggression. Bushman et.al. (2016) supported this observation by saying that almost all mass shootings in America are committed by males and the same is true for youth violence. All types of youth violence are predominantly committed by and affects the males.

Physical Aggression:

Eagly & Steffen (1986) did a meta-analysis of studies pertaining to gender differences in aggression and found that all over the world males are more likely to indulge in physical aggression that produces pain or physical injury than women. The intensity of physical aggression also tends to be more by males than females. Archer (2004) said that these differences exist across the cultures.

Provocation:

Another factor that differentiates between male and females' aggression is direct provocation. There is no gender difference in case of direct provocation. Both male and female aggress equally when there is direct provocation. But in the absence of provocation, the chances of males aggression are more than females. (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996).

Verbal Aggression:

Both men and women use verbal aggression in terms of using harsh words, however, it is found that men use more extreme forms of verbal aggression (e.g., swearing) than females.

Indirect Aggression:

Indirect aggression are actions aimed to harm a person, but which are not performed directly against the target person. For instance, gossiping, spreading false rumors, excluding others from a social event, damaging or destroying the target person's property, revealing another person's secrets without his permission, causing embarrassment, making insinuations without direct accusation, and criticizing others' appearance or personality, etc.

In all such cases, the harm is done to a person without that person being physically present. Archer (2004) said that teenage girls are more likely to engage in indirect aggression than boys. Compared to physical and verbal aggression that can be impulsive, Indirect aggression requires a lot of planning, strategy and subtlety, requires a lot of learning and that is why it appears in teenagers rather than at much younger age.

Bjorkqvist et.al. (1992;1994) found similar results in Finland and stated that this difference continues into adulthood too. Adult women, compared to men, use more indirect form of aggression in various areas of life. The question arises why women use indirect aggression more than boys. There can be four reasons for it –

1. There is social and cultural acceptance of such aggression. Most cultures are patriarchal in which men hold more power and status than women. The social norms in such cultures reward men for being warriors (using direct aggression) and punish women for becoming aggressive. Barber et.al. (1999) said that when women behave aggressively and are dominant, they often face backlash against them.
2. Girls are relatively weaker in physical strength than boys and therefore it is safe for them to use indirect aggression.
3. People with lower status will be scared to aggress directly against a person of higher status and indirect aggression is safe. This is applicable to gender differences too. Girls have lower status in patriarchal societies.

In nutshell, one can say that gender differences in aggression depends upon the costs involved, type of aggression, age and the cultural values. The gender differences in aggression are much more prominent where men hold all the power.

5.3.4 Situational Causes of Aggression-

Apart from social and personal causes of aggression, situational causes also play a major role in aggressive acts. Though there are many situational causes of aggression, at present, we will look at only three situational causes of aggression.

Temperature and Aggression - The Effects of Heat:

Studies have reported that people often feel irritable and short-tempered on hot and steamy days, because of the discomfort that they experience in such temperatures. However, there is inverse U relationship between aggression and temperature. If people are exposed to high temperatures for a prolonged period, they become so uncomfortable that they become lethargic and focus on reducing their discomfort rather than being aggressive against others.

Baron & Richardson (1994) demonstrated this phenomenon, in a laboratory setting, where the experiment was conducted under controlled conditions. The temperature was systematically varied as an independent variable. Participants were exposed to pleasant conditions (temperature being 70-72°Fahrenheit) to extremely uncomfortable conditions (temperature being 94-98° Fahrenheit). In all such conditions, they were given a chance to aggress against another person. Results indicated that very high temperatures reduced aggression for both provoked and unprovoked participants. In extremely hot conditions, the participants were so uncomfortable that they concentrated on getting away from that temperature rather than on aggressing against others. However, these studies conducted in laboratories were criticized because participants in these studies were exposed to extreme temperatures for only a few minutes. In real life, temperatures do not change in a few minutes.

To overcome this limitation, Anderson et.al. (1997) conducted a study using different methods. They collected the average annual temperature of 50 cities of America, over a 45-year period (from 1950 – 1995). They also collected information about the rate of violent crimes (aggravated assault, homicide, etc.), property crimes (burglary, car theft, etc.) and another crime that is considered basically very aggressive., rape. Then they did analyses of all this data to determine whether there is any relationship between temperature and various crimes. Other variables that could impact such a relationship such as poverty, age, distribution of population, etc. were controlled. It was found that violent crimes were higher in hotter years but there was no effect of temperature on property crimes and rape. This study supported the assumption that heat is linked with at least some form of aggression. However, this study did not indicate anything about the inverse relationship between heat and aggression.

Rotten & Cohn (2000) conducted a study to test the nature of the relationship between heat and aggression. They reasoned that when heat is more, if people feel so uncomfortable that they try to get away from that heat rather than think about aggressing, then aggression should be stronger in the evening than in afternoon. The temperatures are at their peak in the afternoon and start falling from their peak in the evening. That means there should be a curvilinear relationship between heat and aggression. Their study did prove that. So, there is truth in a saying that “when temperatures rise, tempers too”. These findings become extremely important in the light of global warming that the world is experiencing now.

Alcohol:

A common belief is that alcohol consumption triggers aggressive tendencies in a person. Many research studies also have supported this belief and shown that when participants consumed a lot of alcohol (enough to make them legally drunk), responded to provocations more strongly and behaved more aggressively compared to those participants who had not consumed alcohol (Bushman & Cooper, 1990). Giancola et.al. (2000) too proved it through their experiment. They took both men and women as participants, and divided them into two groups. One group was asked to consume alcohol (1 gram per kilogram of body weight for men and 0.90 gm per kilogram of body weight for women). The other group was no alcohol group. They were given a nonalcoholic drink. However, a few drops of alcohol were put on top of their drink to make sure that their drink smells similar to alcoholic drink. After drinks, all participants were given a chance to play a competitive game, in which they were supposed to give electric shocks to their opponents. Actually, there was no opponent. Experimenter manipulated what was supposed to be the opponent's response. Initially, this so-called opponent gave mild shocks to the participant but later on gave extreme shocks of the highest level. Next, it was the turn of actual participants to give shocks to the opponents. The researchers wanted to see how the participant would respond now. The results showed that –

1. The aggressive reaction of the men in terms of setting electric shock for the opponent was twice more than the aggressive reactions of the women.
2. In the extreme condition, where participants were supposed to give the highest possible shock, both men and women from the alcohol drinking group gave more shock than participants from the alcoholic drink group. Moreover, in alcohol drinking group, the impact of alcohol was greater for men than for women. So, though alcohol increased aggressive response of both men and women, it was more true for men than for women.

The question arises why alcohol increases aggression. There can be various reasons for it, such as -

1. Gantner & Taylor (1992) showed that alcohol simply eliminates inhibitions against impulsive and dangerous behavior.
2. Alcohol makes people especially sensitive to provocations, and they are more likely to aggress then.
3. Bartholow et.al. (2003) said that alcohol reduces cognitive functioning - higher order cognitive functions such as evaluation of stimuli and memory. This makes it difficult for a person to judge and differentiate between others' hostile and non hostile intentions.
4. It also becomes difficult for them to evaluate the effects of their different forms of behavior, including aggression. In other words, they cannot foresee what will be the consequences of their aggression under the influence of alcohol. (Hoaken et. al., 1998). A drunk person has less capacity to process positive information about someone whom they disliked in the beginning. For instance, if a person has provoked them initially and later on apologized for his behavior, a drunk person will not be able to process this new information and may remain aggressive despite the apology.
5. Denson et.al (2012) showed that alcohol reduces the self-control and the ability to inhibit aggressive tendencies especially after provocation.

Gun Availability

There is a growing public demand in America to ban the sale of guns over the counter. Today, guns are so easily available, that even children have access to them. Fowler et.al. (2017) reported that gun homicides most frequently occur in the home and are often connected to domestic or family violence. There are increasing incidents of homicide in schools, malls and suicides by teens.

Psychologists have been studying whether there is any relationship between the presence of a dangerous weapon and increased tendencies of aggression. Santaella-Tenorio et.al. (2016) scrutinized 130 studies carried in 10 different countries where the laws about purchase and access to firearms were changed. They found that with more restrictions on purchase and access to firearms, the number of intimate partner homicide and unintentional death of children came down.

Stroebe (2015) explained how gun availability affects the homicide rates. He said that there can be two possible ways in which gun availability affects homicide –

1. Weapon availability can shape intentions – also known as weapon effect
2. Weapon availability increases the chances of fulfilling these intentions.

Berkowitz, L., & Lepage, A. (1967) tested the hypothesis that stimuli that is commonly associated with aggression can extract aggressive response, especially from the people who are ready to aggress. They took 100 male undergraduate students as the participants in their experiment. In the first

part of the experiment, half of these participants were given shocks repeatedly by their partners and these participants were angry. The other half of the participants were not made angry by their partners. Then, both the groups were given a task in which they could aggress against partners (actually confederates) by giving electric shock to them. The participants could decide how many shocks they would like to give to their partners. Three experimental conditions were created. The room in which participants were supposed to give shocks to their partners had -

1. a gun displayed on the wall.
2. a badminton racquet displayed on the wall
3. no stimulus was there.

The results showed that participants who had been angered and then left in the room where gun was displayed, gave more shocks to the partner (confederate) than those who had been angered but left in either of the other two rooms having nonaggressive stimulus on display and those who had not been angered. Researchers concluded that many aggressive acts get triggered due to weapon effects, that is the mere presence of aggressive cue acts as a cognitive priming.

Klinesmith et.al. (2006) wanted to see why the weapon effect takes place. In their study, they gave for 15 minutes, either a gun or a toy to male participants. They found that compared to toy handling conditions, in gun handling conditions, the testosterone levels of participants increased as well as the aggression that they displayed towards another person. This study further showed that weapons in the hands of people who are already angry can lead to more aggressive behavior.

It was also found that if a person has an intention to kill, the availability of a gun increases the chances that such a person will succeed in committing homicide. Zimring(2004) said that if a person has an intention to kill others (Homicide), or intention to kill himself (suicide), then guns are more effective than any other weapon to fulfil this intention. Guns are very effective in causing death at mass scale in the shortest possible time. Studies have shown that owning a gun or living a house where gun is present increases the chances of homicide and suicide.

This is the reason why activists are demanding a law restricting the purchase and ownership of guns by a common man.

Check Your Progress:

1. Do you think frustration and provocation lead to aggression?
2. Why do people aggress as a response to social rejection?
3. Does exposure to media violence increase aggression in real life?
4. Why do some people aggress more than others?

5.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, we looked at what aggression is, what are its various forms. We also discussed the theoretical perspectives of aggression starting from instinctive theory, evolutionary theory, drive theory to modern theories of aggression. In modern theories of aggression, we discussed GAM indicating that it is not just one factor that causes aggression but a combination of various situational and personal input factors and cognitive processes that contribute to aggression. Looking at causes of aggression, we looked into the basic causes such as frustration and provocation, social causes such as social rejection and exposure to media violence. Under personal causes of aggression, we looked into individual differences, i.e., why some people aggress more than others, the role of hostile attribution bias and narcissistic personality of a person, as well as the role of gender in aggression. In the present unit, we looked at only three situational causes of aggression, viz., temperature, influence of alcohol and easy availability of guns. This list is not exhaustive, there are many more causes of aggression.

5.5 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in detail the biological factors responsible for aggression.
2. Discuss the role of frustration and provocation in aggression.
3. Elaborate on social causes of human aggression.
4. Which personal factors contribute to aggression.
5. Discuss in detail the situational causes of human aggression.

Write short notes on the following –

1. Video games and aggression
2. Temperature and Aggression
3. Narcissism and Aggression
4. Alcohol and Aggression
5. Weapon Effect

5.6 REFERENCES

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AGGRESSION: ITS NATURE, CAUSES AND CONTROL - II

Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Aggression in the Classroom and at Workplace
 - 6.2.1 What is Bullying
 - 6.2.2 Cyberbullying: Electronic Means of Harm Doing
 - 6.2.3 Can Bullying be Reduced?
- 6.3 What Research Tells Us About: Workplace Aggression
- 6.4 What Research Tells Us About: The Role of Emotions
- 6.5 The Prevention and Control of Aggression
 - 6.5.1 Punishment
 - 6.5.2 Self-Regulation
 - 6.5.3 Catharsis
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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand –

- What kind of aggression takes place in classrooms and at workplace
- What is bullying
- What are types of bullying, why it takes place
- how bullying can be reduced
- How aggression can be either prevented or controlled

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Bullying is prevalent not just in India but throughout the world in every society and every culture. It takes place in all socioeconomic strata, all races and ethnic groups and across the gender. Bullying can take place in various forms – physical, verbal, social and emotional. It can take place in an immediate social environment or in the cyber world too. It can have an extremely devastating effect on the victim and can even lead to death of the victim. So, it becomes imperative for us to study this phenomenon,

what is bullying, who does it, why do they do it, does it affect victims only or bullies too, and how it can be prevented. In the present unit, we are going to dwell on these issues.

6.2 AGGRESSION IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT WORKPLACE

Bullying is a form of aggression that is very common in schools, colleges, workplaces and even parks. The main hub of bullying in schools, colleges where children, adolescents and young adults spend maximum unsupervised time.

6.2.1 What is Bullying

Bullying has been defined as

Unwanted, intentional, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance that is often repeated over time (Olweus, 1993).

Hymel & Swearer (2015b) defined bullying as a form of interpersonal aggression in which one person- the bully – intentionally and repeatedly aggresses against another person- victim – and he does so, partly because the bully has more power or status than the person he seeks to harm.

The question arises why bullying occurs and who becomes the bully and who becomes the victim of bullying? The research shows that bullying takes place due to various reasons. It can be due to personality factors or contextual factors. Let us see each one of them.

Personality Factors:

Personality of the Bully:

1. Muñoz et.al. (2011) believed that personality factors such as being callous towards the sufferings of others makes a person bully.
2. Navarro et.al. (2011) found that advocating masculine traits and anxiety (Craig, 1998) causes a person to become a bully.
3. Apart from these traits, bullies will have higher status or more power than the victim but they may be suffering from depression.
4. Bullies lack respect for themselves as well as for others.
5. Bullies have high social intelligence, that is, they can judge others accurately and have enough social skills to get along with others. But they seek to harm those who can't defend themselves.
6. Psychoticism – Bullies are cold, aggressive, egocentric, empathy, tough minded, impulsive, sensation seeking, hostility towards others and a lack of cooperation and sensitivity in social situations.
7. Bullies have a hostile attributional bias, a kind of paranoia. They perpetually attribute hostile intentions to others.
8. Students with disabilities having low social and low communication skills have higher chances of becoming bullies. (Rose et.al.,2011)

Personality of the Victim of Bullying:

They are the people who generally feel unhappy and unsafe and consequently have poor academic performance (Konishi et.al. (2010).

1. They tend to be lonely, withdrawn and socially isolated. They are loners, have very few friends and feel uncomfortable interacting with their peers. Victims are high on introversion and low on social acceptance.

As a result, they are not liked much by their peers and when they are attacked by bullies, no one comes forward to help them to defend themselves.

2. Faced with conflict, they are gripped with fear. Their fearfulness and physical weakness probably set them up. They cry and assume defensive postures. Not only do they not fight back, they hand over their possessions—handsomely rewarding their attackers psychologically and materially—powerfully reinforcing them.
3. Socially Incompetent – Spend time in passive play or playing parallel to their peers rather than with them.
4. They are less strong willed and emotionally unstable. That means that they have difficulty in regulating their emotions. This puts them at risk of further victimization.
5. Studies have shown that students with autism tend to become victims of bullying more than children with other disabilities (Wallace et.al.,2008).
6. In India, it has been found that students from lower castes are more likely to be the target of bullying than upper caste students.

Contextual Factors:

Cook et.al. (2010) pointed out that no one is born as a bully. It is the social factors that make a person a bully. For example, bullying comes from families or abusive homes –

- i) Physical Violence, Verbal Abuse by Parents- parents become role models for such behavior.
- ii) Permissive/Absent Parents – kids with such parents or those who had poor parental supervision also resort to bullying. It gives them a sense of power and control which is lacking in their own lives.
- iii) Lack of Attention from Parents- bullying becomes an outlet for getting attention.
- iv) Sibling Bullying – can also lead to bullying behavior. Elder brother torments the younger one – the younger one feels powerless- bullies others in college to regain the sense of power. My Older brother serves as a role model.

- v) Peer Pressure – fear of being not accepted or becoming the next target.
- vi) Conflict between parents, involvement of family members in gangs, or being victim of parental abuse also makes a person a bully.

Similarly, the factors related to school can be poor teacher-student relationships, lack of teacher support, school climate that does not punish or even encourages bullying. (Richard,2012).

At community level, the factors that may be responsible for bullying are unsafe and dangerous environments in which aggression and violence is shown by others and not punished by authorities. In fact, bullying and victimization may be encouraged.

Bullying can take many forms such as physical harm, verbal taunts and threats, social exclusion, rumor spreading, name calling,

6.2.2 Cyberbullying: Electronic Means of Harm Doing

Use of social media is as prevalent today as the use of electricity. It is but natural that bullying behavior has raised its ugly head in the cyber world too. Cyberbullying is defined as the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phones, instant messaging, and social media as means of engaging in deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior that is intended to harm others.

Just like other forms of bullying, cyberbullying too is based on the intention to harm the victim and is based on power differences between bully and victim. The bully derives his power from the better knowledge of technology and it's uses than the victim (Kowalski et.al.,2014). Cyberbullying also occurs repeatedly. The only difference between other forms of bullying and cyberbullying is that in other forms of bullying, the bully knows that the victim can identify him, knows him, but in cyberbullying, the bully believes that he is anonymous.

Cyberbullying has as much adverse effect on the victim as the other forms of bullying. The victims of cyberbullying experience negative physical, psychological and social adjustment problems such as depression, poor academic performance, suicide ideation and other problem behavior. They also experience reduced popularity and increase in drug usage.

6.2.3 Can Bullying be Reduced

Effects of Bullying and Being a Victim of bullying:

The person hurt most by bullying is the bully himself, though that's not at first obvious, and the negative effects increase over time. Most bullies have a downwardly spiraling course through life, their behavior interfering with learning, friendships, work, intimate relationships, income, and mental health. Bullies often turn into antisocial adults, and are far more likely than non-aggressive kids to commit crimes, batter their wives, abuse their children—and produce another generation of bullies. Bullying

students become less engaged in school and their grades suffer (Cornell et.al.,2013).

The victims of bullying have difficulty in making friends, have negative self-appraisal, substance abuse, loneliness and have high truancy (Cook et.al.2010; Fitzpatrick et.al.,2010)

Looking at the common prevalence of bullying and its negative effects, it becomes imperative for policy makers, law enforcers as well as all authorities and stakeholders in the society to find ways to fight this malice. Lot of research has been carried out to eradicate all forms of bullying and some of the findings of these researches are as follows (Bradshaw 2015) –

1. Strong efforts should be made to strictly supervise children's behavior in the playground, classrooms and other school settings.
2. Teachers should be trained to recognize and either prevent or stop bullying through consistent disciplinary practices. It has been found that schools with both fair discipline and a supportive atmosphere have less bullying.
3. School authorities should hold meetings with parents and make them aware about the harmful effects of bullying.
4. Students and others in the school should be coached that whenever they witness an incident of bullying, they should report it to the teacher or any other higher authority and they should not give any positive reactions to the bully. Any positive reaction from the bystanders will be considered as a sign of approval by the bully and that will encourage him/her to escalate his effort to harm or humiliate the victim.
5. Identified bullies and victims of bullying should be given counseling. Bullies should be sensitized to the inappropriateness of their actions and the harmful effects their actions produce.
6. There should be a program to teach prosocial skills in regular classes and opportunities should be given to practice these skills. Social and emotional learning can help students become more respectful and considerate of others (Espelage & Low,2012).
7. Special programs should be designed to test whether children change their initial behavior as a result of exposure to preventive intervention techniques, and if yes, then how much they change. If there is no change in children's original behavior after getting exposed to mild intervention technique (such as enhancement of their social skills, small changes in their school climate), then they are exposed to stronger intervention techniques such as using the help of mental health professionals to help reduce their personal problems that may be leading to bullying.
8. Teaching actual or potential victims of bullying the ways to deal with bullying. They should be taught what to do when the bullying occurs and how to seek help.
9. Paluck et.al. (2016) conducted a study on the prevention of bullying in schools and reported that bullying gets substantially reduced if certain norms in the school s are changed, such as encouraging small

set of students to take a public stance against typical forms of conflict at their school. They argued that many students consider bullying or conflict behavior in school to be typical, expected or even desirable behavior. To change this perception, we need to seed a social network with individuals (called “social referents” who can show new behaviors and have high influence on social norms and then hope that through process of social influence undesirable behavior will change and spread into positive behavior through network.

They argued that members of any group infer community social norms by observing the behavior of community members who have many connections within the community’s social network. These community members may be the ones who are very popular, have a greater socialization skill or have a lot of social status and power within the group. They are called “Social Referents”. It is believed that these social referents have comparatively greater knowledge of desirable behavior patterns in the community.

The researchers conducted the study in 56 schools and found that in one year’s time, the incidents of bullying came down by 30% in schools where popular social referents publicly denounced conflict and became anti conflict role models. They were most effective in influencing social norms and behavior among their network connections as well as in school climate.

6.3 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT: WORKPLACE AGGRESSION

We have mentioned before that bullying is prevalent not only in school, colleges but at the workplace too. At work place it can be due to -

Causes of Workplace Aggression:

1. Abusive bosses mistreat, shout at and even threaten their subordinates.
2. Employees too sometimes harm their colleagues, especially if they believe that certain colleagues have mistreated them or have been unfair to them. Some employees may feel that management has not been fair to them and the target person has received the benefit but the same legitimate benefit has been denied to them.
3. Sometimes disgruntled customers can indulge in physical aggression, e.g., if a patient dies, the relatives of that patient hold the doctor treating that patient, responsible for the patient’s death and may indulge in physical and verbal aggression. They may indulge in damaging the property.

Workplace aggression is as dangerous as bullying in school or colleges. Workplace aggressors may not retaliate immediately. They are willing to wait to get the right opportunity to get their revenge. Therefore, we need to look at the causes, forms and effects of aggression at the workplace.

Forms of Workplace Aggression:

Physical violence at the workplace is not common. Barclay & Aquino (2010) said that generally, aggression at the workplace takes place in subtle forms. The aggressor designs it in such a way that the victim cannot identify who caused him the harm. The aggressor does cost benefit analysis. He/she wants to cause maximum harm (benefit) at the least cost (or danger of repercussion or revenge) to himself.

These subtle forms can be –

- Spreading negative rumors about the target person,
- Verbally insulting, treating disrespectfully, deliberately ignoring the target person
- Reporting that the target person is planning to change his job,
- Taking important secrets of the company at the time of changing job,
- Engaging in unethical or illegal behavior to harm the company's interests,
- Removing equipments or resources that the target person needs to complete his task,
- Expressing disapproval of projects that the target person favors,
- Destroying his personal property,

Effects of Workplace Aggression:

Aggression at the workplace has an effect on the employees as well as on the organization itself.

These effects for the employee can be –

1. Negative mood, cognitive distraction, fear, exhaustion, depression
2. Psychosomatic (e.g., sleep problems, migraines, headaches, gastric problems, vomiting, insomnia, decreased libido, etc.),
3. Negative emotional response (hostility, anxiety, irritation) and organizational (e.g., absenteeism, accidents) results (Barling, 1996).
4. Apart from these, the victims frequently feel helplessness, guilt and have decreased self-esteem.
5. If workplace aggression is in extreme form and prolonged, the victims may have mood and anxiety disorders, addictions or suicidal attempts. For example, Dr. Tadvil from Nair Hospital, Mumbai, committed suicide after being allegedly harassed by three senior doctors at her work place. Long term exposure to workplace aggression can change relationships with coworkers, increase conflicts, decrease motivation and productivity of the victims.

6.4 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS

Psychologists studying the psychological causes of aggression stated that emotions are a major trigger for aggression. Yet, there are many instances where worst forms of aggression without any emotional trigger at that time, e.g., contract killing does not involve any emotion. A contract killer does not know the person he is killing and does not have any anger towards that person. He is just doing his job just like any other professional. A person who gets angry, may not react immediately with aggression. He may wait for months or years to get a right chance to be aggressive, and when he does, at that time there may be no rage left in him, he may be just getting even with the person who had angered him in the past. We cannot say that emotions are the only reason for aggression to take place.

Some psychologists argue that 'aggression always involves strong emotion'. There are two dimensions to emotion –

1. The nature of emotion can be positive or negative.
2. The intensity of emotion can be high or low.

The question arises, can emotions of negative nature and high intensity trigger emotion. Zillmann (1988,1994) showed through their experiment that yes

Check your Progress:

- What is classroom bullying?
- What is cyberbullying?
- What are the forms and effects of workplace aggression?
- How can bullying be reduced?

6.5 THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF AGGRESSION

Aggression is not inevitable. Though in the previous unit we did discuss the instinctive theories of aggression, which give the impression that aggression is inevitable, later research has shown that aggression is an outcome of combination of cognitions, personal characteristics and situational factors. This indicates that there is a hope to either prevent it completely or at least control the aggression. Let us look at some of the techniques of controlling aggression.

6.5.1 Punishment: Revenge or Deterrence

Punishment refers to delivering aversive consequences after the undesirable action has taken place. All over the world, punishment is used as an effective tool to control undesirable behavior, especially aggression.

Aggression can be of two types – permitted aggression and prohibited aggression. Permitted aggression is desirable and fetches reward, e.g., soldiers are given gallantry awards for killing enemy soldiers. Prohibited aggression is undesirable aggression and fetches punishment, e.g., aggression against kith and kin, unfair aggression is frowned upon.

Punishment can be given in various forms, such as putting a person in jail, large fines, solitary confinement, physical punishment such as capital punishment, etc. The question arises, why do societies punish aggressive actions? Darley et.al. (2000) gave two reasons for it –

1. There is a strong belief in all societies that improper aggressive actions should be punished. Such aggressors should receive tit for tat.

It also implies that the quantum of punishment to be given should be equal to the amount of improper aggressive act. For example, the punishment for causing grievous physical injury to another person should be less than the punishment for murdering that person.

The administration of punishment also depends on the motive behind the aggressive act. If a person has aggressed to save himself or his family from the other person, then the severity of punishment should be less.

2. **Punishment as a Deterrent:**

Punishment may be used to set an example for other people and deter them from aggressing in the future. This implies that societies or governments should make sure that it is easy to detect the crimes. If aggressive acts (such as hidden or covert forms of aggression) are not detected, then punishment cannot be given, and the lessons for others will be that you can commit aggressive acts as long as you are not caught.

Magnitude of Punishment:

Secondly, the punishment given should be strong enough to act as a deterrent and people should not get the impression that even if they are caught, they can get away easily with mild punishment. In other words, the cost (punishment) should be more than the benefit (Joy of aggression).

Public Punishment vs. Private Punishment:

Thirdly, punishment should be given publicly and not privately. If others do not come to know that the aggressive acts were punished, the punishment will not act as a deterrent for future crimes. This is especially relevant for cultures where public shame is seen truly as a negative outcome.

The question arises which of these two perspectives are perceived as fair punishment by people. Carl Smith Et.al.(2002) believed that the first perspective is more important for punishment to be seen as fair one. They

explained that across different contexts, people consider punishment to be fair if it is considered that the aggressor deserved it or that it was morally correct to punish that person. In other words, people generally believe that “the punishment should fit the crime”.

Punishment as a Safety Measure:

Another reason for using punishment is to protect the potential victims. It has been observed that once people engage in violent crime, the chances of their repeating that aggressive act in the future are very high, e.g., the rapists, murderers are likely to repeat their act if not caught and punished. Very often, judges give such dangerous people long term prison sentences to remove them from society, so that others are safe from them. Though it does not guarantee the safety of other prisoners in the jail where such people are lodged. However, it is a common observation that once released from jail, such people repeat the crime for which they were jailed.

Effectiveness of Punishment:

Punishment can reduce the tendency of specific people to indulge in later harmful acts of aggression, only if following four conditions are met –

- a) **It must be prompt** – the punishment should be given immediately or as quickly as possible after the undesirable behavior occurs. The more the delay in giving the punishment, the less effective it will be.
- b) **It must be certain to occur** – There should be consistency in giving punishment. It should not happen that sometimes an aggressor gets punished and other times he goes scot free without getting punished for the same crime.
- c) **It must be strong** – It should be strong enough to be highly unpleasant for the potential recipients. For example, if the fine for breaking a traffic signal is just Rs. 10, it may not deter people from breaking traffic signals. On the other hand, if the fine is Rs. 1000/-, it will deter people from breaking the signal.
- d) **It must be perceived as justified** –If the recipient of the punishment perceives the punishment as unjust or undeserving, he will be angry and may aggress more rather than deter from indulging in such acts. Such people may consider punishment as an act of aggression against them, as a kind of provocation and consequently aggressive.

Unfortunately, in reality, these four conditions are rarely met. The justice system takes months or even years before the punishment is meted out to the criminal. Very often criminals are not caught or bribed to go scot free, so the certainty of punishment is low. It is a reality in every country that the magnitude of punishment given also varies from case to case and generally minorities or marginalized people of the society are punished more than people from high class. Eberhardt et.al. (2006) found that when the victim of the crime was a white man and the suspected criminal was a black man, the defendant was looked more as “stereotypically black” and

given the death sentence as a deserving punishment. Even if the punishment is strong enough but it is not perceived as justified, rather it is seen as an act of aggression, it will in fact lead to more aggression rather than reduce it or prevent it.

6.5.2 Self- Regulation

Self-regulation refers to our capacity to regulate many aspects of our own behavior including aggression. Though evolutionary theory has suggested that aggression is an adaptive behavior for our survival and also to get a desirable mate for a man, living in a civilized society, aggressive behavior does not always lead to desirable consequences. Very often it is beneficial to restrain ourselves from aggressing. With the advent of languages, negotiation techniques, and laws as the cultures have developed, aggression is no more the only way of resolving conflicts.

Baumeister (2005) stated that all of us have internal mechanisms to restrain anger and overt aggression. These internal mechanisms are called self-regulation. It is an important inner strength to enable people to resist temptation and hold back from acting on their impulses. We can say, the immediate cause of violence is often the breakdown of self-regulation.

However, self-regulation is not always effective for everyone. Self-regulation often fails because to exercise it requires a lot of cognitive effort and everyone does not have these cognitive resources or skills of using them. Baumeister & Tierney (2011) believed that self-regulation is a limited resource and it functions like energy. It increases or decreases in an individual across time and circumstances. If people have already spent some of their self-regulation energy on a particular task, then their capacity for further self-control will be reduced and if at that point their aggressive impulse is instigated, they will be less able to restrain it. Stucke & Baumeister (2006) demonstrated this in their experiment. They divided the participants into two groups. One group was refrained from eating cookies or restrained from giving emotional reactions to a movie, while the other group was a control group and not asked to restrain themselves in any way. Later on, both the groups were insulted by the experimenter and were given a chance to aggress against the experimenter. The participants in the experimenter group who had exerted self-control in the initial task aggressed more against the experimenter than the other group. Their capacity to self-regulate had depleted and therefore, they could not control their anger.

Positive Attitude towards Emotional Regulation:

However, Mauss et al. (2006) believed that self-control of aggressive impulses does not always involve use of cognitive resources. If people have a positive attitude towards their own emotional regulation, they may be able to restrain their aggressive impulses effortlessly.

Prosocial Thoughts:

Meier et.al. (2006) suggested that aggression can be reduced or avoided altogether if a person actively thinks about helping others, caring for them, etc. In short, if he actively puts in an effort to have prosocial thoughts. In a situation that can trigger aggression, the sooner people can bring prosocial thoughts to their mind, the less likely they are to be aggressive.

All the above discussion makes it clear that making our internal mechanisms strong is the key to controlling aggression. We all have such mechanisms, we need to only strengthen them. There are many ways to strengthen these internal mechanisms, such as –

- Getting exposed to a non-aggressive role model who restrains himself even when strongly provoked.
- Taking training to strengthen the internal restraints.
- Recognizing when our cognitive resources get stretched, so that we can take measures to not give in to inappropriate aggressive tendencies.

6.5.3 Catharsis

The word catharsis comes from a Greek word catharsis meaning 'purification' or cleansing or purging. Catharsis means getting rid of negative emotions in a safe manner. People generally believe that expressing your aggressive emotions and thoughts in an indirect and socially approved manner can reduce extreme anger. Many psychologists, including Freud too believed that catharsis works to reduce anger. There are many socially approved ways to vent your anger, such as, writing a nasty letter but not posting it, watching, reading or imagining aggressive actions, etc. There are various toys available through which anger can be expressed in a safe manner. However, there were many other psychologists who conducted scientific research to test the veracity of effectiveness of catharsis. They found that there is very little truth in this claim. Catharsis does not reduce aggression, in fact, it increases it. (Bushman et.al., 1999; Bushman, 2001).

Anderson et. al. (2003) conducted a research to see the effect of catharsis. They argued that if the claims about catharsis are true, then listening to songs with violent lyrics should reduce the level of hostility and level of aggressive thoughts in the listener. On the other hand, if catharsis does not work, then listening to songs with violent lyrics should increase the level of hostility and aggressive thoughts in the listener. They conducted a number of experiments to test this assumption and found that participants who heard a song with violent lyrics felt more hostile than those who heard a similar but non-violent song. These effects were the same across songs and song types such as rock, humorous or non humorous. Similarly, to test whether listening to songs with violent lyrics increased their aggressive thoughts, another experiment was conducted. After listening to songs with either violent content or nonviolent content, participants were presented with 20 pairs of words and asked to indicate how similar,

associated or related these words were with each other. It was assumed that if listening to violent lyrics increases the accessibility of aggressive thoughts then ambiguous words will also be seen as similar to aggressive words. The results supported this assumption. It was found that after listening to a violent rock song, participants interpreted the meaning of ambiguous words such as rock and stick in an aggressive way and they responded much more quickly to aggressive words than nonaggressive words.

This clearly indicated that catharsis does not work. If at all there is any truth in the effectiveness of catharsis, it is very minimal. When people vent their angry feelings in a safe manner (e.g., punching a doll or a pillow, throwing unbreakable things, banging the doors shut, shouting at others who can't hear them, swearing under their breath, etc.) it makes them feel better emotionally. But feeling better may increase the link between anger and aggression. "Letting it out" just reduces their emotional discomfort, not anger. The question arises then, why "letting it out" does not work. There can be many reasons for it, such as –

1. When people think about the wrongs that others have done to them and imagine ways of harming them in retaliation, their anger increases instead of reducing.
2. Watching aggressive scenes, listening to songs with aggressive lyrics, or merely thinking about taking revenge may activate and increase their aggressive thoughts and feelings. The research on playing violent video games has proven this.
3. Having highly active aggressive thoughts and feelings may influence their interpretations of actual social interactions so they may interpret even ambiguous actions or words of others as hostile.

It can be said in the conclusion that catharsis does not help in reducing aggression.

6.5.4 Reducing Aggression by Thinking Nonaggressive Thoughts

We have seen that aggression begets aggression in higher measures. The question arises how it can be stopped. Psychologists suggested that if thoughts and feelings that are incompatible with aggression can be induced in an angry person, that will help in reducing aggression. Many psychologists have scientifically proven that thoughts and feelings that are incompatible with anger and aggression help in reducing or eliminating the aggression. These incompatible reactions can be of different types such as humor, empathy towards the potential victim and even mild sexual arousal. These incompatible responses will throw an angry person 'off the track' and the chances are less that he will aggress. The same logic is used when folk wisdom suggests that if you are angry, count up to 10 before reacting. Counting up to 10 will change the focus of thoughts and that may be sufficient to reduce the anger.

Baron (1976) conducted a study on this issue. He used confederates to manipulate different experimental conditions and the dependent variable was the time taken, in terms of number of seconds, to honk by the stalled motorist. It was believed that honking is a mild form of aggression. In this experiment, 120 passing motorists (participants in the experiment) were delayed for 15 seconds when a confederate did not move his vehicle after the traffic light turned from red to green. Before the traffic light turned from red to green, participants were exposed to one of the following conditions –

- a) **Humor** – An assistant/confederate crossed between the two cars wearing a clown mask. This was done to induce unexpected feelings of humor.
- b) **Empathy** – An assistant/confederate crossed between the two cars wearing a cast (worn when bone is fractured) and using crutches. This was done to induce empathy towards the assistant.
- c) **Sexual Arousal** – An assistant/confederate crossed between the two cars wearing a revealing outfit. This was done to induce mild sexual arousal.
- d) **Control** – The assistant/confederate simply walked between the two cars in a normal manner.

It was expected that all three experimental conditions would induce incompatible reactions among drivers who were getting angry with the driver of stalled car in front, and they would take much longer time to honk compared to control conditions. The results supported this assumption. The drivers in all three-experimental condition (humor, empathy and sexual arousal) waited for much longer time before honking. We can safely say that feelings incompatible with anger or aggression reduce overt aggressive acts.

This is visible in our day-to-day life too. You must have noticed very often that if there is a heated argument going on between two people which may lead to escalated aggression gradually, if one of the people just changes the topic of discussion to some unrelated topic, the anger levels come down and the possibility of aggression can be averted.

In the end, we can say that we are neither as helpless as the instinct theories make us out to be, nor are we hostage to various situations. We can reduce aggression by using a variety of techniques.

6.6 SUMMARY

In the present unit, we have discussed that bullying is also a form of aggression. It is prevalent all over the world, in all cultures, from time immemorial. It can take place in classrooms or at the workplace or even within the families. Bullying can be in the form of physical aggression, psychological aggression, social or emotional aggression. Since the use of the internet and social media is very prevalent, bullying now takes place in that environment too. It is called cyberbullying. Bullying in any form and in any environment, can have devastating and long-lasting effects on the

victim. Not only that, it can have adverse effects on the perpetrator of bullying. Bullying can take place due to personal or contextual factors. The positive thing is that bullying can be reduced by using different techniques.

Bullying can take place in the work environment too. The causes and form of aggression at the workplace differ to some extent from class room bullying. However, even at work, aggression can be reduced.

Some of the techniques used to reduce or control aggression are punishment, self-regulation, catharsis and inducing thoughts incompatible with aggression.

Check Your Progress:

- Write a detailed note on punishment and self-regulation to reduce aggression.
- Write a detailed note on catharsis and inducement of incompatible thoughts and feelings to reduce aggression.

6.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is bullying? Explain in detail cyberbullying.
2. Explain the nature of bullying, its effects and how it can be reduced?
3. Write a detailed note on workplace aggression.
4. Write a detailed note on the role of emotions in aggression.
5. How aggression can be curbed by using punishment and self-regulation. Explain
6. How aggression can be curbed by using catharsis and inducement of incompatible thoughts and feelings. Explain.

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PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR: HELPING OTHERS - I

Unit Structure:

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Motives for Prosocial Behavior
 - 7.2.1 Empathy- Altruism: It Feels Good to Help Others
 - 7.2.2 Negative State Relief: Helping Can Reduce Unpleasant Feelings
 - 7.2.3 Empathic Joy: Feeling Good by Helping Others
 - 7.2.4 Competitive Altruism
 - 7.2.5 Kin Selection Theory
 - 7.2.6 Defensive Helping
- 7.3 Summary
- 7.4 Questions
- 7.5 References

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand -

- The concept of prosocial behavior
- The physiological aspect of prosocial behavior
- Why do people help - the motives for prosocial behavior?

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to talk about prosocial behavior. In very simple terms, prosocial behavior means helping behavior. Before we actually begin with the topic, let's recollect some of the day-to-day experiences that all of us must have gone through. For example – have you experienced a situation where, while waiting at the bus stop, a stranger comes and asks you directions to a particular address or asks you which bus will go to a particular location(e.g. kalina Campus) and you have given that information, or you have gone to a bank and a stranger asks you to lend him a pen for a minute, a road accident takes place near the bus stop where you were standing, did you feel concerned about the person, did you see people from nearby rushing towards the accident site to help that person? Did you also miss your bus and went to help that accident victim? A few days back, you heard that an old lady in your locality has fallen ill and there is nobody to look after her. Did you feel concerned about her? If your answer is yes to all these situations, then you have been indulging in prosocial behavior.

Prosocial behaviors refer to "a broad range of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself-behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing and cooperation" - Daniel C. Batson.

In other words, prosocial behavior includes not just helping others overtly but also covertly, i.e., even if you feel concerned for the well-being, security, feelings, etc. of another individual or a group of people, it is prosocial behavior. But there is a rider to this explanation. It will qualify as prosocial behavior only if it is voluntary, does not have any apparent ulterior selfish motive behind it or was not motivated by professional obligation. In other words, if a professional helps a person in the line of duty, it will not be considered as prosocial behavior, e.g. A nurse helping a patient in a hospital to walk or to sit up on the bed, it will not be considered as prosocial behavior. Moreover, help given to any organization other than charities will not qualify as prosocial behavior. If a person supports any charity organization, it is considered as prosocial behavior because such support means that the helper uses the charity as a tool to increase the efficiency of the help given. For example, money donated to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund is a prosocial behavior, provided the donation is not given for saving on personal taxes.

Prosocial behavior is very common in our society. There are many instances, where people have helped others at the risk of their own lives, e.g., fishermen in Kerala saved many people's lives during extraordinary floods in 2018, in spite of being in danger of losing their own lives. Such heroic acts of helping are called '**altruism**'. In other words, we can say that prosocial behavior is the one that benefits both the helper and the receiver of the help, while altruism is a type of prosocial behavior which has a cost for the helper and benefits the receiver of the help. Batson (1998) defined altruism as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another person's welfare.

Now let us take another instance, there was a news item in T.V. in May 2019 that a fire broke out in a coaching class that was situated on the top floor of a four-story building in Surat. There were many onlookers who just stood there, making videos of young children, jumping to their deaths, in an attempt to save themselves. None of the onlookers thought of any means to save these children. The question that arises from these instances, is why do people help or why do people don't help?

Many studies have been carried out in psychology to answer these questions. Let's see some of the motives that prompt helping behavior.

7.2 MOTIVES FOR PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Research studies have shown that there is not just one factor but a combination of various personal and situational factors that influence us in deciding whether to help or not and if we do decide to help then how much help we are willing to provide.

7.2.1 Empathy - Altruism: It Feels Good to Help Others

One of the factors responsible for prosocial behavior to take place is 'empathy'. In very simple terms, empathy means the ability to understand or be aware of the feelings and emotions of other people.

According to Merriam Webster dictionary empathy refers to being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another, of either the past or present, without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.

In other words, understanding the situation from another person's point of view. A person with empathy can vicariously experience the discomfort or unpleasant feelings of the other person and wants to help him get rid of that discomfort or unpleasantness, without expecting anything in return for himself.

Empathy is different from sympathy. Empathy is when you can put yourself in the position of another person and on the basis of what you know about that person, you can imagine how that person must be feeling. Thus, empathy involves projection. On the other hand, sympathy simply means understanding others' discomfort or pain without putting yourself in their place.

In other words, sympathy is 'feeling for' someone while empathy is 'feeling with' the person in need of help, through the use of imagination. Batson et.al. (1981) gave the concept of 'Empathy- Altruism Hypothesis' and suggested that though people help due to various motives but at least some of their prosocial behavior is motivated purely by empathy, that triggers the desire to help. If the empathy is in the form of compassion then this desire to help may be so strong that a person will help even if the helping task is unpleasant or life threatening for him.

Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman believe that empathy has three distinct types, viz.,

1. **Emotional Empathy** – It is known as affective empathy also. It is the ability to share the feelings of another person. It helps to build emotional connections with others.
2. **Cognitive empathy**– It is also called empathic accuracy. It is the ability to accurately perceive or understand another person's thoughts and feelings, to know exactly how a person feels and what he might be thinking.

Gleason et.al. (2009) referred to it as a skill of "everyday mind-reading". They believed that adolescents with high cognitive empathy skills will have better relationships with others and better social adjustment. Consequently, they will have more friends, will be more popular among peers, will have better quality of friendships and there will be less chance of their becoming a victim of bullying

or social exclusion. To verify the relationship between empathic accuracy and social adjustment they conducted an experiment. Participants in this experiment were shown tapes of students having conversation with a teacher. The tape was stopped at specific times and participants were asked to write down what they think the student and teacher in the tape are thinking or feeling. Empathic accuracy was measured by comparing their written responses with what the people in the tapes were actually thinking or feeling. It was found that participants having high empathic accuracy had better social adjustment. This clearly indicated that their ability to understand others' thoughts and feelings led to better relationships with others. However, we cannot say conclusively that only higher empathic accuracy was responsible for better relationships with others. There is a likelihood that people who get along well with others have pleasant interactions with many other people and that makes them more empathetic.

3. **Compassionate Empathy** – It is also known as empathic concern. It refers to not just understanding how the other person is feeling but also to have a feeling of concern for the wellbeing of the other person. Compassionate empathy actually moves a person to actually do something to help a person to improve the well-being of another person. It requires spending more time and effort than other two types of empathies.

All three types of empathies work in tandem but trigger different aspects of prosocial behavior. For example, suppose a friend of yours fails the exam. You can understand what it means for a person to fail the exam, how it will impact his future plans, and how exactly your friend must be feeling. This is part of cognitive empathy. you will feel sorry for him, you will sympathize with him by remembering how you felt when you yourself had experienced failure in the past or if you had never experienced failure yourself, you can imagine how it feels when one fails. That is part of emotional empathy. And lastly, compassionate empathy triggers the helping action. You feel the concern and want to reduce the impact of failure on your friend. So, you may begin by asking your friend what you can do to help him and if he says I don't know why I failed though I have worked very hard for the exam, you decide to help him by sharing with him your own studying techniques or taking up his studies every day for that exam, to provide him your own study material, notes, etc. relevant to that exam.

Mirror Neurons: A Biological

Psychologists were interested to know whether nature has wired our brains to feel empathy. The answer is YES. Research studies have shown that there are certain specific areas of our brain, called mirror neurons, that get activated whenever we experience an emotion ourselves or we see others expressing emotions through their facial expressions. In other words, these mirror neurons are "smart cells" in our brains that allow us to understand others' actions, intentions, and feelings. These neurons fire irrespective of

whether we or others are experiencing positive emotions such as happiness or negative emotions such as fear, anger or sadness. When we see someone being sad, for example, our mirror neurons fire and that allows us to experience the same sadness and to feel empathy. Thus, mirror neurons enable us to empathize with others. For example, Pfeifer et. al.(2007) found a correlation between self-reported empathy and the activity in the mirror neurons region of the brain. Their study indicated that the level of empathy experienced by a person was positively related to the level of activity in his/her mirror neurons was. While observing another person in pain, more a person was empathic, higher was the activity in his/her mirror neuron area.

However, children with autism spectrum disorder have very low capacity to learn language, to imitate and learn from other's exactions or understand their intentions or empathize with others' pain, to have social interaction and social communication. Psychologists wondered whether such children suffered from low activity of mirror neurons or dysfunctional mirror neuron systems. Though, results of such investigation have not been fully consistent, yet it was found that such children did have low activity in their mirror neurons while having social interaction. This explains their inability to have empathy towards others.

Montgomery et.al. (2009) further supported the proposition that mirror neurons are positively connected to empathy when they reported their observation that mirror neurons become active when individuals see the emotion laden facial expressions of others but show no activity when individuals see facial movements that are not related with emotions such as chewing or sneezing. Their finding further proved that mirror neurons are related to others' emotional experiences and thus were related to empathy.

Next psychologists wondered whether empathy is simply innate or can it be taught or increased by training. Studies have shown that empathy can be taught or increased through training. One can learn to become compassionate with practice. Weng et.al. (2013) showed that as a person practices being empathic/ compassionate, his mirror neuron regions show increased activity. Thus, research suggests that our empathic capacities are both genetically inherited in terms of mirror neurons as well as learnt. For instance, Krznaric (2012) believed that empathy is a skill that can be cultivated throughout our lives and can be used as a radical force for social transformation. Decety & Yoder (2015) suggested that interventions such as experience sharing, mentalizing and compassion can be useful in developing empathy

Lastly, Zaki (2014) concluded it by saying that empathy can be increased or decreased. For example, some of the factors that help in increasing empathy are positive affect, the desire to affiliate with others, the desire to be liked by others and look good to them by doing things that are right or appropriate for a given situation (social desirability). The factors that can decrease empathy are the cost of experiencing empathy and watching

others' suffering that can be too painful for a person to experience empathy.

In conclusion, we can say that empathy is not an automatic reaction. Whether it will occur or not, and if it occurs, what type of empathy will occur depends upon certain conditions. However, it needs to be underlined that empathy is very important to build successful social relationships of all types and lack of empathy can lead to antisocial personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder.

Check your progress:

1. What is prosocial behavior?
2. What is the difference between prosocial behavior and altruism?
3. How empathy can trigger altruistic behavior?
4. Do you think our brains are wired for prosocial behavior?

7.2.2 Negative State Relief: Helping Can Reduce Unpleasant Feelings

In the above discussion, we learnt that people help others because they understand the feelings of the person in need of help (empathy accuracy), share those feelings (emotional empathy) and are concerned about the welfare of that person (empathic concern). But psychologists indicate that apart from empathy, there can be other factors also that can prompt helping behavior. For instance, the emotions or moods experienced by the helper will also play a significant role in deciding whether a person will help or not. It is very natural to assume that people in a happy mood or experiencing positive emotions will help more than those in a sad mood.

But Cialdini proposed a negative state relief model stating that in certain situations, people help others for selfish reasons, they help others to relieve their own sad feelings. When an individual observes another person being harmed or in need of help, it produces a negative emotional state or personal distress for the person and that itself motivates an internal drive to reduce this negative feeling. People have an inherent drive to reduce their own negative moods or feelings. Seeing or knowing that another person is in distress makes us feel bad. We help ourselves to get rid of this sad feeling by helping distressed persons. However, we help only if we feel that there is no other way to relieve a negative state and we believe that helping will allow us to relieve the negative state. If we can make ourselves feel better in a way that is easier than helping, such as ignoring the distress of the needy person, we won't help. Thus, prosocial behavior motivated by our desire to reduce our own distress and discomfort is egoistic and not due to altruism.

This model suggests that helping behavior will occur to reduce personal distress irrespective of the source of negative emotions. The potential helper's negative emotions may be aroused by noticing the emergency (e.g., noticing a victim bleeding and in a lot of pain due to an accident) or by some other previous event (e.g., failing an exam). The helping behavior will occur if following two conditions are met –

1. Helping another person is cost effective.
2. The person firmly believes that helping will reduce his/her negative emotional state.

7.2.3 Empathic Joy: Feeling Good by Helping Others

Empathic joy model is exactly opposite of negative state relief model. It states that helping behavior takes place because helping another person produces positive reaction from that person and that creates a positive feeling in the helper. In other words, knowing that his actions have made a positive change in another person's life and has made that person happy makes the helper happy. It is to enjoy this kind of happiness shown by the victim the helper helps. Empathy is not about just feeling the pain of another person, it is also about feeling someone else's pleasure. It will make the helper happy, especially if his actions have caused that happiness.

Of course, it is important for a person to know that his actions have actually created a positive impact on the victim. To experience empathic joy, the helper needs to get feedback on his actions. To verify the role of feedback in experiencing empathic joy, Smith, Keating and Stotland (1989) conducted a study. All participants were females. They were shown a video in which a female student was shown to be in distress. She said that she will drop out of college because she felt isolated and distressed. For half of the participants, the girl in the video was described as similar to them (high empathy condition) and to the other half of the participants, the girl in the video was described as dissimilar to them (low empathy condition). After watching the video and getting a description of the girl in the video, all participants were asked to write down answers to questions the woman had about her difficulties. At this stage, half of the participants were told that they would be shown another video showing improvement in her plight as a result of their advice (feedback condition). The other half of the participants were not promised any such feedback. The results were consistent with the empathic joy hypothesis. Participants in the high empathic condition and feedback condition gave more advice (helping behavior) than in the low empathic and no feedback condition.

Psychologists have found a very strong positive link between prosocial behavior and wellbeing and happiness of the help provider. Aknin et.al. (2012) found that even two-year-old kids also experienced increased happiness when giving a valued resource away. Aknin et.al. (2013) conducted another study to investigate whether the link between prosocial behavior and happiness is universal or specific to some cultures only. They conducted the study across 136 countries, both rich and poor countries. They took a sample of a total 200,000 people from all these varied countries and asked them to indicate whether they had donated money to some charity in the past one month and to complete a questionnaire on well-being. They found a positive relationship between prosocial spending and well-being of the donors. However, the strength of this relationship varied depending upon whether it was a functional relationship or an accessible relationship. Functional relationship means

that a positive relationship between prosocial behavior and happiness exists in all cultures but to varying degrees. This relationship is stronger in some cultures than others. Accessible relationship indicates that specified relationship appears everywhere with little or no cultural variation. Aknin et.al. (2013) conducted another study to investigate the link between prosocial spending (giving donations) and emotional rewards, in economically diverse countries such as Canada, Uganda, South Africa and India. Participants were given a chance to buy a “goody bag” containing a lot of good things like chocolates. Half of the participants were told that they will get that ‘goody bag’ for their own consumption and the other half were told that a sick child in a local hospital will receive that goody bag (prosocial behavior).

They were asked to complete a questionnaire on happiness after that. The results showed that in each country, participants who bought a goody bag for a sick child scored much higher on the happiness scale than those who bought it for themselves. These results assumed more significance because 20% of participants from South Africa who took part in this study and scored higher on happiness scale in prosocial condition did not have enough money to feed themselves and their families in previous years. These results clearly indicated that there is a strong relationship between prosocial behavior and an individual’s happiness and secondly, human beings had a universal tendency to experience happiness from their prosocial behavior.

7.2.4 Competitive Altruism

In the above discussions so far, we have seen how altruism (intention to help others even at the cost to oneself), empathy, desire to reduce one’s own negative mood, deriving happiness by helping others leads to prosocial behavior. However, psychologists had been wondering whether experiencing positive emotion or concern for others is the only reason for prosocial behavior? The answer is no. There are other reasons for prosocial behavior to take place and one of them is competitive altruism. Psychologists believe that sometimes helping behavior is used as a tool to enhance the status and reputation of the person who is giving help. Competitive altruism can be defined as the process through which individuals try to outcompete each other in terms of generosity. Enhancing one’s status and reputation through generosity can bring huge benefits that might have been unattainable for the giver and these benefits can offset the cost of giving help.

The question arises why helping others enhances the status and reputation of a giver? The reason is that helping behavior involves spending a lot of time, money, effort and energy on activities that are unselfish and beneficial for others. This indicates to other persons that the individual engaging in such activities has some desirable personal qualities. People like to be surrounded by such altruistic people, groups or societies. People who indulge in such helping behavior enjoy high status in the society. This is the reason why Alumni donate a lot of money to their colleges, people donate to get a room or subject chair in a college or prize money to be

given to meritorious students, named after them. It is a common observation that human societies often reward people for their altruistic contributions through medals for bravery in wars, reverence for political leaders and social workers (e.g. Baba Amte). At the same time, they punish those who fail to consider the interests of others, for example, public condemnation of cheaters, imprisonment of criminals, etc.

7.2.5 Kinship Selection Theory

Evolutionary biologists were intrigued with human being's altruistic behavior. For them, it was a biological paradox. On one hand, there is a well - established principle of survival of the fittest that advocates that any behavior and even body parts that does not help us in our survival get eliminated by nature and the behavior and body parts that help us in our survival become stronger and stronger and become part of our genes and get passed on to next generation as genetic heritage. However, on the other hand, the paradoxical question is that how can behavior (helping others) that necessitates our spending extra energy, resources, that may even put our survival at risk and reduce our chances of survival while increasing another person's chances of survival, become part of our genetic inheritance. The principle of natural selection propagates selfish behavior.

This paradox was answered by another evolutionary principle that states that the survival of an individual is less important than the survival of the individual genes. Thus, if altruism increases the chances of our genes being reproduced and prosper, then the chances are very high that we will indulge in altruistic behavior and it will get passed on to subsequent generations too and become part of our genetic composition.

Research studies have given evidence for this proposition to be true. For instance, Neyer & Lang (2003) found that generally we are more likely to help those who are closely related to us than those who are not related. It proves that proverb that

'Blood is thicker than water'. In another series of studies, Burnstein et.al. (1994) asked participants to respond whom they would choose to help in an emergency. The results showed that the students indicated that in cases of emergency, in which a person's life was at stake and the helping involved a lot of effort, time, and danger, they would be more likely to help a person who was closely related to them (for instance, a sibling, parent, or child) than they would be to help a person who was more distantly related (for example, a niece, nephew, uncle, or grandmother) or non-relative. Moreover, consistent with kin selection theory, they were more likely to help young relatives rather than older ones. This is because younger relatives have a better chance of propagating their common gene pool than older relatives. So, a young female relative has a better chance of receiving help from her kin than an older female relative.

Even children indicate that they are more likely to help their siblings than they are to help a friend (Tisak & Tisak, 1996). Though these studies provide evidence in support of kin selection theory, there are still some unanswered questions. For instance, why do people also help those who

are not related to them, who are totally strangers? This question is answered by **reciprocal altruism theory**. This theory suggests that we help others with the idea that if we help others now, they will help us when we need help in the future. Thus, our chances of survival and to propagate our genes get enhanced and similarly those also who receive our help. This is the reason why even total strangers are helped.

7.2.6 Defensive Helping

Defensive helping is another motive for prosocial behavior. Studies on interpersonal relations show that people have a tendency in their social world in two groups – ingroup and outgroup. Ingroup is the one whose members are either related to them or similar to them. They share their group identity. Outgroup members are perceived to be as having an identity which is distinctly different from their own ingroup. All individuals consider their own ingroup as superior than outgroup or other groups. People tend to give more help to their ingroup than to outgroup members. They are more committed to their own group.

However, sometimes the other group or the outer group performs so well that it threatens an individual's own group's superiority. In such a situation, Sturmer & Snyder (2010) stated, that people help the outer group, to undermine the outer group's superiority, to show that outer group is incompetent and dependent on their help. This way they try to reduce the threat to their own group's superiority or status. This type of helping is called defensive helping. This help is not given to help anyone but to rather show them as inferior or to 'put them down'.

The objective of defensive help is to restore the superiority of positive distinctive social identity of their own group. So, this help is not given to any other outer group but only to that outer group that poses a threat to the superiority of their social identity. This help does not originate from empathy or from a desire to have empathic joy but to keep their own group's superiority intact.

This help is given even if the other person has not asked for it or does not even need it. This is just to assert indirectly that the other person is incompetent. This help is also called assumptive help and is mostly given for easy task where the helper does not have to put in much effort and highlights the incompetence of the other person. For instance, some people keep rendering voluntary services because it makes them feel good compared to the group to which they are rendering the voluntary services. To verify defensive helping, Nadler et.al. (2009) conducted a study with a sample of student participants from three different schools. Let us call these three schools A,B,C schools. All participants were administered a test measuring cognitive abilities. At the end, participants from one of the schools (let us say school A) were informed that the participants from the second school (school B) have got higher marks than their own school students (thus a high threat to their group's superiority was created) and third school's (school C) students have similar marks as school A's (low threat to their own group's superiority). Then they were given a chance to

help students of school B and C. It was observed that students of school A gave more help to students of school B rather than to school C. This way they wanted to reduce the status threat from this group to their own group.

Pondering over the entire discussion on helping behavior, one can realize that helping behavior is a complex phenomenon. It can originate from various motives, can take many forms, can affect the helper and the recipient in many ways.

Check your progress:

1. Write a detailed note on negative state relief models and empathic joy models.
2. Elaborate on competitive altruism and defensive helping as motives for helping.
3. Describe kin selection theory as a base of prosocial behavior.

7.3 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have emphasized on the meaning of prosocial behavior and the reasons for prosocial behavior to take place. We began with explaining that prosocial behavior means helping behavior. Any act will qualify as helping behavior if there is no selfish intent involved in it. We also emphasized that prosocial or helping behavior is universal and has been there right from the beginning of civilization. In fact, even animals exhibit prosocial behavior. Next, we looked at the various motives for such behavior to take place. The first one was the empathy **-altruism hypothesis**, where it was said that empathy leads to altruism, which is a form of helping behavior. Empathy has three parts – emotional empathy, cognitive empathy and empathic concern. Prosocial behavior can be triggered by combination of all three parts of empathy but the form of prosocial behavior depends upon which part of empathy is more dominant at that moment.

Another reason for prosocial behavior to take place is explained by the negative-state **relief model**. This model suggests that people experience emotional discomfort when they see another person in distress and therefore help others to reduce or remove their own emotional discomfort.

In contrast to the negative state relief model, the **empathic joy hypothesis** suggests that a person who receives help exhibits positive emotions such as joy, and the joy of the recipient triggers positive feelings in the helper too. So, a person gives help to experience this vicarious joy. Happiness triggered due to the happiness of others, especially if the helper is instrumental in giving that happiness.

Another set of psychologists propagated the **competitive altruism theory, the kin selection theory and defensive helping theory**.

The competitive altruism theory believes that we help others with an ulterior motive. Helping others is a universal social norm. We help others to enhance our status in the society, to get appreciation and reward from the society.

The kin selection theory comes from the evolutionary principle that all human beings are programmed by nature to ensure their own survival and also to propagate their genes to the next generation. Propagating our genes is more important than our survival also and that's why we help our kith and kin even at the cost of our own survival in emergency situations.

Defensive helping is also motivated by our selfish motive. We help those who appear to threaten our ingroup's social superiority and by helping them, we want to show them as incompetent.

7.4 Questions

1. Define prosocial behavior and altruism. Why does empathy lead to altruism?
2. Distinguish between negative state relief model and empathic joy model. Which one of these two triggers the helping behavior?
3. Distinguish between competitive altruism and defensive helping. Which one is more beneficial for the recipient?
4. Write a detailed note on the evolutionary base of prosocial behavior.

7.5 REFERENCES

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PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR: HELPING OTHERS - II

Unit Structure:

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Responding to an emergency
 - 8.2.1 Helping in emergency
 - 8.2.2 Safety in numbers
 - 8.2.3 Key steps in deciding to help or not
- 8.3 Factors that increase/decrease the tendency to help
 - 8.3.1 Factors that Increase Prosocial Behavior
 - 8.3.2 Factors that reduce helping
- 8.4 Crowdfunding: A new type of Prosocial Behavior
 - 8.4.1 Emotion and Prosocial Behavior
 - 8.4.2 Gender and Prosocial Behavior
- 8.5 Are Prosocial Behavior and Aggression opposites?
- 8.6 What research tells us about paying it forward: Helping others because we have been helped
- 8.7 What research tells us about how people react to being helped
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Questions
- 8.10 References

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand –

- Why people help/ do not help when help is required in an emergency situation.
- The important steps taken in making decision about helping
- The factors that contribute to or inhibit the helping behavior
- The role of emotions in helping behavior
- The role of gender in prosocial behavior
- The new forms of helping behavior that are emerging such as crowd funding
- The reactions of people receiving help
- The relationship between helping behavior and aggression.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we talked about what is prosocial behavior and what motivates prosocial behavior. However, very often, people do not help even if they want to, especially in emergency situations. Making a decision about actually helping involves many steps and even after the decision is made, there can be various situations that may facilitate or hinder the occurrence of prosocial behavior. In the present unit, we will look at all those factors. We will also see what are the new forms of helping behavior and how do people react when they are given help. We will also see whether aggression can be considered as an opposite of prosocial behavior.

8.2 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

We have often seen people go out of their way to help others when there is an emergency, e.g., a major road/ rail accident, people stuck in flood waters, tsunami, etc. In fact, in grave situations, people from other states too travel to help total strangers, as happened in Kerala's recent floods. On the other hand, there are people who do nothing when an emergency is unfolding, e.g., the fire in Surat's building as described before. The question arises why people help or do not help in an emergency?

8.2.1 Helping in Emergency

One would assume that more help will be forthcoming when there are more potential helpers but this does not seem to be the case. In fact, the research shows that more the number of potential helpers or bystanders, the chances of providing help reduce dramatically. For instance, this inverse relationship between number of bystanders and helping behavior intrigued two social psychologists, John Darley and Bibb Latané after they learnt about the murder of Kitty Genovese in New York city. Kitty Genovese lived in an apartment above a row of shops. In 1964, 28 years old Kitty was stabbed many times when she was about to enter her apartment and she ran on the road screaming for help. The attacker left and returned to assault her again. Second time it lasted for half an hour as the attacker continued to stab her. Her neighbors from that building could see and hear what was happening but none of them came forward to help her or even to call police from the safety of their own homes. This incident created a lot of furor at that time. Many people blamed it on selfishness and indifference of people living in big cities. Thus, indicating that helping behavior depends upon only on personal characteristics of a person. Others did not agree that people in general are selfish and indifferent. Darley and Latané too did not believe that helping behavior in an emergency depends solely on personal characteristics. They decided to check scientifically whether social conditions are strong enough to influence our helping behavior, especially in an emergency? Their work has become a classic study of social psychology. Let us look at their work.

8.2.2 Safety in Numbers

On the basis of their experiments, Darley and Latañe concluded that the lack of action by others in Kitty's case was due to the '**bystander effect**'. They defined 'bystander effect' as the phenomenon in which the presence of people (i.e. bystanders) influences an individual's likelihood of helping a person in an emergency. No one helps because everyone witnessing the emergency assumes that someone else would do it or take care of the situation. Darley and Latañe termed it as '**diffusion of responsibility**'. This explains why more bystanders leads to less likelihood of the victim receiving the help from any individual.

To check out the idea of the bystander effect, they conducted a classic research study. They started with the belief that the number of individuals present in an emergency situation influences whether an individual will respond or not and if he does respond to help, then how quickly he will respond. They assumed that the more bystanders present in an emergency situation, the lesser will be the chance of any one individual out of them, responding and helping. If at all an individual does help, he will take much longer time to respond than he would have taken if there were no bystanders. To test this assumption, they took male college students as a sample. Participants were placed in separate rooms with a microphone. They were told that they would discuss their college problems over the microphone. They could hear other persons but could not see the other persons as they were in different rooms. The independent variable in Darley and Latañe's experiment was the number of people with whom the participant believed that he was interacting. Darley and Latañe manipulated the independent variable by creating three situations.

They informed the participant that he is interacting with –

- One another participant who is sitting in another room.
- Two other participants who are sitting in other separate rooms.
- Five other participants who are sitting in other separate rooms.

However, these other participants were just pre recorded voices. The dependent variable was the helpfulness and it was measured in terms of -

- a) in each experimental condition the percentage of participants who attempted to help
- b) the time that passed before the help was given.

At some point during the discussion, Darley and Latañe created a fake emergency situation. Participants heard as if someone was beginning to have a seizure – the victim's voice began to break and there were cries for help. The dependent variable was the amount of time a participant will take to respond to such an emergency and help.

The results were as per Darley and Latañe's expectation that diffusion of responsibility does influence the decision to help or not to help. If the participants believed that more bystanders were there, fewer participants came forward to help and took much longer time to do so. Most of the

participants who thought they were in one-to-one interaction with the other person (two-person group situation) responded to the emergency and went out to inform the experimenter, whereas only 31% participants responded when they were in a six-person group situation. Moreover, participants in two-person group condition responded took less time to respond than participants in six-person group condition. Darley and Latañe said that in two-person group conditions, participants felt the maximum pressure to help as not providing help would have led to the feelings of guilt and shame. So, they quickly resolved this conflict by deciding to help. On the other hand, in a six-person group condition, Participants felt they were not alone in witnessing the emergency and did not feel the pressure to help, consequently, they were less likely to help or were slower to help than participants in two-person group situations. This experiment clearly indicated that it is not just the internal factors such as apathy and indifference that determines the decision to help or not but the social factors to influence such decisions.

However, Levine et.al. (2005) concluded from their study that this bystander effect does not apply when the victim is a member of one's own group. Irrespective of how many bystanders are there, individuals immediately help a victim if the victim happens to be from their own clan. This was further supported by other research studies. For instance, Kunstman and Plant (2009) observed in their study that there is very less likelihood of black men receiving help from white bystanders, especially if the white bystanders are high in aversive racism. Aversive racism refers to negative emotional reactions towards a particular race.

8.2.3 Key steps in Deciding to Help or Not

While Darley and Latañe suggested that people don't help others especially when bystanders are there, there are instances where people have responded collectively in case of an emergency. For example, on 11th Sept. 2001, terrorists hijacked a Boeing plane that flew from New Jersey and would have landed in California. Hijackers had planned to crash the plane in the Capitol Building in Washington. Passengers together overpowered the four hijackers and tried to regain the controls of the plane. They could not prevent the crashing of the plane, but instead of crashing in a public building in Washington, it crashed in a rural area of Pennsylvania. Everybody on the plane, including hijackers, died in the crash but no one died on the ground. The passengers were considered heroes and heroines by people all over the world. But the question that intrigued the psychologists was, why bystander effect or diffusion of responsibility did not take place in this situation.

Levine et.al. (2005) explained it by saying that helping behavior took place collectively because they could see each other and interact with each other. On the other hand, in Darley and Latañe's experiment, participants did not respond or took longer time to respond because they were interacting on microphone and not face to face. Thus, one can conclude that direct interaction plays an important role in deciding whether to help or not to help.

Darley and Latañe believed that before giving or not giving actual help, a person goes through a series of quick decisions, especially when a person is faced with sudden and unexpected emergency. This decision making process involves 5 steps and at every step, there can be many factors that can influence the decision to help or not to help. Let us see each step of decision making and the factors influencing each one of them.

a) Noticing/ Failing to Notice That Something Unusual Is Happening:

Emergency is not something that one anticipates before it happens, it happens suddenly. We are usually busy doing our routine things, thinking about various things, concentrating on our own things, or we may be simply sleeping, or listening to music through earphones while taking a stroll on the road, etc. In short, we are not paying attention to others and we may not notice that there is an emergency that needs our help. In such cases, there is no question of helping anyone. This is one of the reasons why people in crowded areas such as markets are less likely to help. They are simply overloaded with stimuli from their immediate environment and do not notice an emergency situation.

b) Correctly Interpreting an Event as An Emergency:

Even if a person notices an unusual activity or situation, he may not be sure that it is an emergency that needs help. A person may have very limited or incomplete knowledge about what is happening. For instance, suppose a man is lying on the footpath, the passersby notice him, but are not sure whether it is an emergency or not. The person may be a homeless person who is sleeping on the footpath, a drunkard who has just passed out on the footpath, a person who has fallen unconscious or even dead. If a potential helper is not completely sure about whether it is an emergency or not, he will hesitate and wait for more information before deciding whether to help or not.

The potential helper hesitates to help till he is very sure of an emergency because if he has misread the situation and it is not an emergency then his actions can cause embarrassment to him. In most of the situations, people will consider the situation as non-emergency and will not take any action, if the information about a situation is ambiguous and one cannot be sure whether it is a serious matter or trivial matter. For example, if people see one man beating a lady on the railway station, the lady may be screaming for help, but people will hesitate to interfere because they are not sure whether the man is a stranger and aggressor or if it is a fight between husband and wife.

This hesitation about helping in an ambiguous situation gets further accentuated if there are bystanders, because it is very embarrassing for a person to misinterpret a situation and act inappropriately. Especially if these bystanders happen to be strangers. This tendency to hesitate and do nothing in the presence of strangers is known as **pluralistic ignorance**.

Pluralistic ignorance means that none of the bystanders are sure about what is happening and they each one of them depend on others to give the cue about the situation. If others do not react, the potential helpers will also not react due to the fear of being seen as stupid or overreacting. They think other bystanders are not intervening because these others have concluded that the situation is not an emergency and there is no need to intervene.

Darley and Latañe demonstrated the pluralistic ignorance effect through an experiment. They asked participants (students) to sit in a room and fill a questionnaire. They created three experimental conditions –

1. Each student was placed alone in a room
2. There were three naïve students in a room
3. There was one naïve student and two confederates in a room

While students were filling up the questionnaire, after some time, experimenters secretly pumped smoke in the room through a vent. 75% of lone subjects calmly noticed the smoke and left the room to report it. But only 10% of the subjects with confederates reported it. Surprisingly, in the three-naïve bystander condition only 38% reported the smoke. Even when the smoke became so thick that it was difficult to see, 62% continued to fill a questionnaire if they noticed that others were not responding to smoke. It was like saying, risking death is preferable to making a fool of oneself.

However, Rutkowski et. al. (1983) showed in their study that this pluralistic ignorance or inhibiting effect reduces considerably if people are with a **group of friends** rather than with a group of strangers. This is because friends can communicate with each other and collect more information about how other group members are interpreting the situation. Levine et.al. (2005) too supported this reasoning and said that this is why we find people in **small towns** helping each other more than in **big cities**. In small towns, people generally know each other and communicate to collect more information about the situation while in big cities, most of the people are strangers to each other.

Steele (1988) further showed that people consuming **alcohol** show an increased tendency to help than the sober people, because drunkard people have less anxiety about others' reactions and their fear of doing something wrong or ridiculous is reduced considerably after consuming alcohol.

C) Taking Responsibility to Help:

Once people recognize that there is a problem and interpret it as an emergency, then they need to make a decision about whether it is their responsibility to help or not. In some situations, this responsibility becomes very clear. For instance, if a student becomes sick in the classroom and if the teacher is present in the classroom, then automatically, it becomes the teacher's responsibility to help that student.

Similarly, if there is a fire in the building, it is the responsibility of the fire fighter to control that. But if there is no such authority figure at that emergency situation and it is not clear who should take the responsibility of helping the person, people assume that anyone in a leadership role must take responsibility, e.g., if the teacher is not in the class, then the class monitor should take responsibility if there is an emergency.

If a bystander is alone in that situation and knows that there is no other alternative, then he takes up all the responsibility during an emergency. But if there are a number of bystanders and they are aware that it is an emergency that requires helping action, diffusion of responsibility takes place. For example, in case of Kitty Genovese, that was mentioned in the previous unit, it was found that many people in her neighborhood fully understood that help is needed and yet no one took any action such as calling the police or shouting at the attacker, because they assumed that others in the neighborhood must have taken the action.

D) Deciding That You Have the Knowledge and Or Skills to Act:

Even if a person recognizes the situation as an emergency and knows it is his responsibility to help, he may not help because he may not know 'how' to help. A bystander must be confident that he has the skill and knowledge about the help to be given in a specific situation. For example, if a person sees another person drowning in a river, he understands that it is an emergency situation and it is his responsibility to help as no one else is present, yet he may not help because he himself does not know how to swim.

When emergencies require special skills, usually few bystanders are able to help.

E) Making the Final Decision to Provide Help:

Even if a potential helper crosses the first 4 steps of decision making with a resounding 'yes', still there is no guarantee that he will actually help. Emergencies are potentially dangerous to the helper or may require a potential helper to spend a lot of personal resources such as time, efforts, money, etc. At this stage, bystanders weigh the positive and negative outcomes of helping. Helping behavior may be inhibited due to the fear of potential negative consequences. For example, many people in India do not help road accident victims because they fear the possibility of police harassment after that. If two people are involved in a physical fight on the streets or if a rogue is troubling a woman in the train, they don't come forward to help because of the fear of getting physically harmed themselves. It is also possible that the person seeking help may be a conman and seeking help is merely a trick to rob or kidnap or rape the potential helper. So, people remain cautious and avoid helping others, even if they feel that it is an emergency.

In short, we can say that a potential helper performs a 'cognitive algebra'. The positive reward of helping comes from the emotions and beliefs of the

helper and the cost of helping may be a real danger embedded in that emergency situation.

Check your progress:

1. Do people help others in an emergency situation?
2. What are the key steps in deciding to help or not to help?

8.3 FACTORS THAT INCREASE/DECREASE THE TENDENCY TO HELP

So far, we have seen how bystander effects can prevent helping behavior in emergency situations. But the question arises, what about the non-emergency situations? What are the factors that can impact helping behavior in non-emergency situations? Let us dwell upon that.

8.3.1 Factors that Increase Prosocial Behavior

One wonders whether all people in need of help do have an equal chance of receiving help or are they discriminated against and compared to others, some people have a better chance of receiving help. If the answer is yes, then the next question that comes to mind is ‘why’ it is so? Why some people have a better chance of receiving help than others. Psychologists have been trying to find the answer to these questions and believe that following factors lead to increased prosocial behavior.

a) Helping People Similar to Ourselves

It is very natural for people to help friends and family members, but what about strangers. Will they help any stranger that needs help? Studies of Hayden et.al. (1984) and Shaw et. al. (1994) showed that people tend to help strangers who are similar to themselves. The similarity may be in terms of age, nationality, religion, gender, etc. One of the reasons for these findings can be that similarity to others increases potential helpers’ empathic concern and their understanding of what the other person must be experiencing. Our empathy increases for people similar to us because we can put ourselves in their place and can imagine what they must be experiencing.

b) Exposure to Prosocial Models – Live or Electronic

We have already learnt that more the number of bystanders, the lesser the chances of anyone helping a person. However, research indicates that if one person out of these onlookers takes an initiative and helps the victim, it motivates others too to come forward to help. The one person who initiates helping behavior becomes the social model whom others follow. It becomes a cue for others about how to behave in a given situation. The social model need not be present in an immediate situation, but if people had been exposed to a person helping others in a similar situation, they will come forward to help in the present situation. For instance, Bryan & Test (1967) conducted a study in which one lady with a flat tire parked her

car on the side of the road. It was observed that other motorists passing by were much more inclined to stop and help her if they had previously seen another lady with similar problems receiving help by another person.

In fact, even a symbolic presence of a helping model is good enough to increase the helping behavior. For instance, in big stores, near the cashier, very often you will find a donation box, made up of glass (so that the content is visible) and having some money in it, including notes of bigger denomination. This indirectly indicates that there have been people who have donated large amounts of money. It makes people think that others have done it so perhaps even I should do it. This trick works many times. To test this idea, Martin and Randal (2008) conducted a study on donation behavior. They created three experimental conditions –

1. the transparent donation box was empty,
2. it was sparsely filled
3. it was generously filled.

They found that having some money in the box significantly increased giving. When the box was empty, giving was at its lowest.

In another design of the study, they filled the donation boxes either with notes or with coins. The results indicated that people tended to give what they saw in the box, if people saw bills, they tended to give the same denominations of bills. If they saw coins, they gave less – i.e., coins.

c) Playing Prosocial Video Games

It is well documented that exposure to violence in the media increases aggressive behavior. Psychologists wanted to know whether the same principle will apply to prosocial behavior and exposure to prosocial video games will increase prosocial behavior. Bushman & Anderson (2002) argued that there is a theoretical basis for such this argument that exposure to prosocial video games will lead to increase in prosocial behavior. For instance, they argued that playing prosocial video games might prime or trigger prosocial thoughts and schemas, i.e., cognitive framework related to helping behavior. If there is repeated exposure to such games, then it may lead to favorable attitudes to prosocial actions and positive feelings related to helping behavior. It may even bring a long-lasting change in the thinking of a person in such a way that it facilitates his prosocial behavior.

Greitmeyer & Osswald (2010) did show through their experiment that exposure to prosocial video games does bring strong and lasting change in the nature of a person. In this experiment, participants were divided into three groups. One group played prosocial video games, another group played aggressive video games and the third group played neutral video games. After that, a situation was created where help was required. The experimenter spilled the box of pencils on the floor. It was observed that 57% of those who played prosocial video games, 33% of those who played neutral video games and only 28% of those who played aggressive video games came forward to help.

To find out the underlying mechanism through which prosocial video games increase prosocial behavior, experimenters conducted another study. They divided participants into two groups. One group was given prosocial video games to play while the other group was given neutral video games to play. Participants in both the groups were asked to indicate what they were thinking about while playing the video games. As was expected, those who were playing prosocial video games, revealed that they were having predominantly more thoughts of helping others than those who were playing neutral games.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies also gave evidence that the amount of time spent on playing prosocial video games positively correlated with prosocial behavior even after a lapse of several months. Thus, playing prosocial video games has not only short-term impact but also long-lasting impact on a person.

This also highlights the fact that playing video games does not have adverse effects by itself as is commonly believed. It depends upon the content of the video game, whether it will produce aggressive behavior or helping behavior.

d) Feelings that Reduce Our Focus on Ourselves

Many psychologists have proposed and proved that a feeling of awe leads to an increase in prosocial behavior. So, what is the feeling of awe? Awe is an emotion experienced by a person when he comes across some powerful stimuli that makes him feel very small (Keltner and Haidt,2003; Tilquin,2008; Piff et al.,2015) The sense of awe reduces a person's sense of self-importance makes him pay more attention to his role in society (Piff et al.,2015).

Research shows that when experiencing awe, individuals who experience awe usually donate more (Piff et al.,2015) and help more (Prade and Saroglou,2016). They are less selfish in their personal relationships too with others (Campbell et.al.,2004). Awe is a positive emotion that inspires "small self" by reducing self-interest, self-centered tendencies and self-importance and shifting the individual's attention to others and the collective identity (Piff et al.,2015).Piff et.al. (2015) validated this through their experiment in which they divided the participants in two groups. One group saw truly impressive trees, triggering the feeling of awe and the other group saw a very tall but ordinary building. After that both groups were exposed to a situation requiring helping behavior. The experimenter dropped a large number of pens. It was observed that those who experienced awe picked up more pens to help the experimenter than the other group. This indicates that awe shifts our attention away from ourselves and our own concerns to others' concerns and we help more.

e) **Social Class: Do People who have Less Give More**

Common sense suggests that people will be more willing to help the other needy person if they have enough resources to spare. In other words, we would expect that a rich person will be more willing to help a poor person because it does not cause him too much inconvenience. However, in reality, it is the opposite of that. We find that the richer a person is, the stingier that person will be and will not help others. Piff et al. (2010) conducted many experiments to test the assumption that people with lower socioeconomic status would actually show higher prosocial behavior than people with higher status. In one of such experiments, they asked the participants to play a “dictator game”. In this game, one person is told that they can divide 10 points between themselves and a partner who can either accept this division or reject it but cannot change it. The number of points a person assigns to his partner will indicate the amount of prosocial behavior shown by that person. Participants were also asked to measure their own perceived class by indicating on a drawing of a 10-rung ladder, ranging from very low income, education and occupation on the bottom to very high on the top. As was expected, the results indicated that there was a negative relationship between socioeconomic status and prosocial behavior, i.e., the lower their perceived socioeconomic status, the greater number of points they gave to their partner.

Piff et al. (2010) reasoned that the difference in the prosocial behavior of people with high or low socioeconomic status is due to the amount of compassion they feel for the other person. People with lower socioeconomic status have more compassion for others and believe that it is important to help those who are vulnerable to harms. Lower-SES individuals often lack resources, depend more on the people around them and on the external environment to achieve their desired life outcomes, and therefore they appear to act in a more prosocial fashion and they are more likely to signal themselves by displaying social engagement. Robinson & Piff (2017) suggested that increased prosocial behavior is a contextually adaptive response for lower-socioeconomic status individuals that serves to increase control over their more threatening social environments.

8.3.2 Factors that Reduce Helping

Just like there are some factors that can contribute to enhancing prosocial behavior, similarly there are factors that can decrease helping behavior.

a) Social Exclusion: Being “Left Out” Hurts

It is a well-known fact that human beings prefer to live in communities and not in isolation. Prosocial behavior, by its very definition, too means helping behavior, i.e., behavior directed towards others. Very often, people perform prosocial behavior because it helps them to stay connected with other people and enhances their feeling of belongingness. So, if a person is rejected by the group or gets isolated in the group, the chances are very high for that person’s prosocial behavior to decrease. For instance, Parkhurst & Asher (1992) found that there is significantly high

positive correlation between prosocial behavior and social acceptance. Other studies have shown that children having few friends have low empathy sensitivity to other distress (Dekovic & Gerris, 1994). Such children tend to see the world as hostile and respond aggressively. Social exclusion reduces people's self-esteem and makes them less satisfied with their lives. Since their sense of empathy is reduced, the prosocial behavior also comes down, they become more aggressive and try to harm those who had excluded them (Schonert-Reichl, 1999).

Twenge et al. (2007) validated this through their experiments. Participants were asked to fill up a personality questionnaire first. While giving them feedback of this questionnaire, three experimental conditions were created-

- a) **Future-Alone Condition**– In this condition, participants were told that their personality was such that in future they will end up being alone. They have friends and relationships, but these are short lived and at the onset of old age, they will be alone.
- b) **The Future-Belonging Condition**– In this condition, participants were told that they tend to have rewarding relationships and these are long lasting stable relationships. They were told that you will always have friends who care about you.
- c) **Misfortune- Control Condition**– In this condition, people were told that they are more likely to meet with accidents in their later life as they are accident prone. Even if they have not been accident prone early in their lives, now in later life, you will be accident prone and will have lots of accidents. This condition was created to show that there is no connection between social exclusion and relationships. Then they were paid \$2 each and they were free to use it as they wanted. At this point, the researcher announced that she has to leave the room as she has to do some other work in another room. But before leaving, she announced that they are collecting money for the 'student Emergency Fund' and it will be highly appreciated if people contribute. However, there is no compulsion for donating. Results showed that participants in the future alone condition donated the least compared to other two conditions. Only 37% of people in this first condition donated. This indicates that when people have a feeling that they would be rejected by other people, in the future, they are less inclined to help other people at present, that is, even before exclusion has occurred.

b) **Darkness: Feelings of Anonymity**

Chen-Bo Zhong et al. (2010) suggested that darkness increases disinhibited behavior, dishonesty and self-interest and reduces prosocial behavior. In most of the cultures, prosocial behavior is a social norm. Sometimes, we perform prosocial behavior only because we can be observed or our act can be identified by others. Through prosocial behavior we want to win social approval. In darkness, others can't see us and the very purpose of prosocial act is removed. Darkness also creates a

sense of anonymity that reduces prosocial behavior and leads to acting on self-interest or may be dishonest behavior too. To test this assumption, Chen-Bo Zhong et.al. (2010) conducted a study. Participants were divided into two groups. One group was put in a slightly darkened room while the other group was placed in a brightly lit room. Both the groups were asked to perform the same task of solving a matrix. They were told that if they perform well on the matrix, they will get extra \$10. It was expected that the chances of participants inflating their scores ,i.e., being dishonest, are much more in a dark room than in a brightly lit room. This was confirmed by the results. Though this study did not measure prosocial behavior directly, being honest and not cheating others is also a form of prosocial behavior. This study did show that darkness creates an illusion of anonymity in a person and that encourages the tendency to ignore social norms. Anonymity also creates deindividuation that reduces the motivation to help others , as others will not notice their prosocial act and consequently their social status will not improve.

c) **Putting an Economic Value on Our Time**

So far, we have seen how emotional factors, such as empathy, current mood, feeling of awe, and cognitive factors such as accurately perceiving others' emotions, understanding their need for help, has impacted our decisions for prosocial actions. Taking this discussion further, it is imperative to look at another cognitive factor that impacts our prosocial behavior, and that is, **the economic cost of prosocial behavior.**

DeVoe and Pfeffer (2010) suggested that when people think about time in terms of money, they are less likely to help. Thinking about time as money changes the way individuals view their time, leading individuals to devalue non-compensated activities, and to spend less time volunteering their time for free. DeVoe and Pfeffer (2010) believed that certain professions train their members to think of time in terms of money. For instance, while doctors charge their patients in terms of treatment given and operations performed, the lawyers and consultants charge their clients in terms of time spent. They propose that when people think about their time in terms of money, they will be less inclined to indulge in any behavior that is not compensated. To test this assumption, they conducted a study with third year law students who had not yet started their own practice and consequently, had not yet started thinking of their time in terms of money. They were asked to fill up a questionnaire about their willingness to volunteer their time for an organization. After 5 months, when they had completed their course and had started practicing, they were asked to fill up the same questionnaire once again. The results showed that in the second round, when the participants had started practicing law and charging their clients in terms of their time spent on cases, they were less willing to volunteer their time for the organization than other law students, who had not yet started practicing. This clearly

indicated that thinking about time as money decreases engagement in non-compensated and time costly activities such as volunteering. In fact, it was found that thinking about time as money decreases engagement in relatively non-time costly activities too. The reason for this might be that thinking about time as money activates the component of an individual's motivational system associated with self-enhancing values (Pfeffer & DeVoe, 2009).

Check your Progress:

1. What are the factors that increase prosocial behavior?
2. What are the factors that decrease prosocial behavior?

8.4 CROWDFUNDING: A NEW TYPE OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Previously, if anybody wanted to start his own business, he used to approach his friends, relatives, banks, etc. for funds. But of late a new trend has started, potential entrepreneurs are approaching total strangers for help. There are many internet websites such as Kickstarter, Wishberry, FuelADream, Indiegogo, etc. that are helping new entrepreneurs to establish their businesses through crowdfunding. These websites upload videos made by entrepreneurs desirous of crowdfunding. These videos show the products/ services offered by the entrepreneur and an appeal to viewers to donate. These appeals do not promise anything in return for the donations received. Since they are seeking donations, there is no question of money being returned, or any share in profits later on, there is no guarantee that the enterprise will succeed or the donor will get any appreciation. Psychologists have been seeking an answer to the question, why would anyone help a person to realize his dreams, when he himself is not getting anything in return? The surveys have shown that very often entrepreneurs succeed in getting a good amount through crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding can be described as a process in which entrepreneurs use the money contributed to set up and then run their companies. As contributors do not receive anything in return, crowdfunding can be termed as a form of prosocial behavior. There are three parties in this act of crowdfunding – the seeker of funds, the intermediary websites and the donor. It is imperative to mention here that these intermediary crowdfunding sites ensure that people seeking funds, really use these funds for the purpose described in their videos.

Psychologists have been investigating the causes behind such prosocial behavior and studies so far have indicated following reasons for it –

- Donor believes that products/ services are good
- They simply want to help.
- It boosts their self-esteem.

However, crowdfunding is neither limited to helping budding entrepreneurs nor it is limited to internet websites only. There are many non-profit, non-government organizations who raise funds from even total strangers to help people in need of money to pay medical bills, to go for higher studies, to meet expenses of a daughter's marriage, etc.

8.4.1 Emotion and Prosocial Behavior

If you are working in an office, you must have often heard your colleagues telling you, right now don't go to your boss to ask for leave or raise or promotion, he is not in a good mood. Even at home, right from childhood, people use the same technique. The young boy waits for his father to be in a good mood or does something to put his father in a good mood, before asking for something special, some concessions, some permissions that he wants. For example, if he has got good marks in an exam and wants to go for a picnic with his friends, he may show his father his marksheet first and then ask for permission to go for the picnic.

However, the relationship between mood and prosocial behavior is not that simple. Research indicates that –

Positive Emotions and Prosocial Behavior:

It has been found that people are more willing to help a stranger when their mood is elevated due to some recent experience, such as listening to a comedian (Wilson 1981), finding money in the coin return slot of a public telephone box (Isen & Levin, 1972), spend time outdoor on a pleasant day (Cunningham, 1979) or received an unexpected small gift (Isen 1970).

Baron, 1990; Baron & Thomley (1994) reported that even a pleasant fragrance in the air can increase prosocial behavior. That's why you will often find shopkeepers spraying room fresheners in their shops.

But there are other studies too that show that the tendency to help decreases when people are in an extremely good mood. This seems to be in contrast to what the above studies have said. The reason for this contradiction is that when people are in an extremely good mood, they tend to misinterpret emergency situations and feel that help is not required. Even if they can read the situation accurately and know that there is an emergency and help needs to be given, they may avoid giving help if required helping behavior is difficult or will spoil their good mood. For example, suppose there is a young man having a great party at home with his friends and is in a happy state of mind. At that point, his neighbor comes and needs help to take somebody to hospital. The chances are very high that the young man will find some excuse or the other to avoid helping that person.

Negative Emotions and Prosocial Behavior:

Some research studies show that generally, people don't help others when they are themselves in a negative mood. However, it also depends upon

the situation. If helping others can change a helper's negative mood into a positive state of emotion, the person in a negative mood is more likely to help than a neutral person or those who are in a positive mood. The reason is that a person experiencing negative emotion wants to get rid of his negative mood and if helping someone else will allow him to reach his goal, he will help. This is similar to the negative state relief model.

Cunningham et.al. (1990) But a person with negative feelings will help only under certain conditions, such as –

- i. Negative feelings are not too strong
- ii. Emergency situation is very clear
- iii. The act of helping is interesting and satisfying and not dull or unrewarding

Feelings of Elation and Helping Others:

Many research studies indicate that even if we watch another person engaged in prosocial behavior, it has a strong positive effect on our emotions. We feel inspired, uplifted and optimistic about the human race, in short, we feel elated. This feeling of elation increases our own prosocial behavior too. Schnall et.al. (2010) provided evidence for this through a series of experiments. In one such experiment, they showed video clips to the participants and created three experimental conditions. Video clip showed –

- a) Others involved in prosocial behavior – a clip from “The Oprah Winfrey Show” (elevation inducing condition)
- b) “The Open Ocean” – a clip from David Attenborough’s nature documentary, describing a journey through the deepest part of the ocean (neutral/ control condition)
- c) Funny comedian- a clip from a British comedy “Fawlty Towers” intended to induce amusement/laughter (mirth condition)

Mirth condition was included to control the elevation effect, i.e., just observing others involved in prosocial behavior generates the positive effect. The results showed that participants reported high levels of elevation only in elevation condition and high levels of amusement only in mirth condition. After the exposure to these three conditions, all of them were asked whether they would help the experimenter by filling up a boring and unpaid questionnaire on math. It was not binding on them to help and the questionnaire pertained to some other study and not the one in which they were participating. It was observed that participants in the elevation condition spent roughly twice as much time on the questionnaire as participants in the other two conditions. The fact that mirth condition and control condition showed no difference in helping behavior compared to elevation condition indicated that feeling of elevation involves more than just positive emotions. These experiments strengthen the belief that kindness is contagious and can increase helping behavior by just getting exposed to such behavior. One can see that the media has immense potential in making society a much more humane society.

Check your Progress

1. What are the new forms of prosocial behavior?
2. What is the role of emotions in prosocial behavior?

8.4.2 Gender and Prosocial behavior

Psychologists wondered whether men help more or women? Research suggests that men and women do not differ in their willingness to help, but who will come forward more to help depends upon the situation. In some situations, men are more helpful than women and in other types of situations, women help more. For example, when a person is in distress, in need of emotional support, women will come forward to help. On the other hand, when a person needs to be rescued from fire, floods, etc. men will come forward.

It can be said that men and women's help is in sync with their gender roles or stereotypes. The female stereotype suggests that women are more likely to be friendly, unselfish and having concern for others, while men are supposed to be masterful, assertive, competitive, and dominant. Women bond with other people easily and form close interpersonal relationships. Men are more agentic, i.e., they do not tend to form close relationships easily. Rather, they connect with relatively large groups. In other words, women form close relationships and give emotional support to only those with whom they have interpersonal connection and not to strangers. Men also form friendships but these friendships are based on common activities or common interests that they share with other group members, e.g., cricket fans, billiard games, long distance motorcycle riding groups, etc. Men help strangers as much as they would help known people. It is also observed that men tend to receive more awards for heroism than women. This indicates that they help others even if it endangers their own lives. On the other hand, women tend to get more awards for helping organizations in their communities, organizations that focus on helping specific individuals in need of help.

Thus, men and women, both engage equally in helping behavior but the kind of help provided is different.

8.5 ARE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND AGGRESSION OPPOSITES?

Generally, we believe that helping behavior and aggressive behavior are opposite of each other. Social psychologists, however, were not willing to accept it on its face value. They pondered over this contradiction for a long time, observed, researched and came to the conclusion that prosocial behavior and aggressive behavior are not exactly opposite of each other, in fact they are quite similar or even overlap. We need to look at the action as well as the effect of that action before deciding whether it was prosocial behavior or aggressive behavior.

Actions:

Whether an action is helping behavior or aggression depends on the motive or intent behind that action. For example, some people help others not to actually help the recipient but to enhance their own social status, to get appreciation from the society for their socially desirable behavior. Thus, it can't be classified as helping behavior. On the other hand, when a parent or teacher punishes a child, can it be termed as aggressive behavior? Perhaps not, as the intent behind that punishment is to improve the academic performance of the child. Similarly, if a coach punishes a sports person, the intent behind it may be to improve the stamina or game of that sports person. This was very aptly shown in a Hindi movie 'Dangal'.

The Effects:

We need to see the effects of an action taken. Normally, we know aggression leads to harm and prosocial behavior leads to benefit for the recipient. However, this also may not always be true. For example,

if we see a person with a sharp knife, cutting a body part of another person or a person inserting a sharp needle under the skin of another person, can we call it an aggressive act? Again, it depends upon the intent of the person, if the person using a sharp knife is a surgeon and cutting a body part with the intention of curing an ailment of another person, it is a helping behavior. On the other hand, if the person with a sharp knife is a robber and stabs another person with the intention of robbing that person, it is an act of aggression. So, we can say that an action is aggression, if a person who is aggressing has the intention to harm another person and another person tries to save himself.

Similarly, there are some acts that may appear to be helping behavior to begin with but they may actually harm the recipient in the long run. For example, suppose a mother keeps doing her child's homework to help him out. What appears to be helpful behavior may actually harm the child as the child will not learn that part of the lesson and may fail in the exam. A parent may not allow a child to travel alone in public transport, so that the child is protected and not harmed in any way. But this may rob the child of experiencing the pros and cons of traveling by public transport. So ultimately, the acts that appear to be prosocial behavior are actually harmful for the recipient.

These examples clearly indicate that at least some actions of aggression and prosocial behavior may overlap and we cannot say that aggression and prosocial behavior are exactly opposites of each other.

Hawley et.al. (2007) had surprising results of their study. They found that aggression and prosocial behavior are used by the same people. It has been found that instead of getting scared or alarmed, people find aggressive individuals very attractive, especially those aggressive individuals who combine their aggression with prosocial behavior, e.g. Robin Hood. According to folklore, he was an outlaw who stole from the rich and gave it to the poor. Such people are seen as tough, assertive but good at heart and helpful. They have good social skills, so they know when to become

tough and want to be kind. Hawley et.al called this as “the allure of mean friends”.

Thus, the motive, the action itself and its effects need to be looked into before we label an act as aggressive or prosocial.

8.6 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT ‘PAYING IT FORWARD’: HELPING OTHERS BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN HELPED

Let me explain it to you through a story. On a rainy day, an old lady got stranded on a lonely road with a flat tire. She was too old to change the tire herself and was looking very troubled. A man passing by noticed her and came to help her. She was scared and did not know what was the intention of this man. Why would he help a stranger? Is he going to rob her? Sensing her fear, the man assured her that he was going to help her and changed the tire in a few minutes. She thanked him and offered to pay him. But he declined her offer and said, “just think of me, next time when you see someone in need” Just remember Bryan Anderson and pay the kindness forward. He drove off. She was amazed by his generosity. She reached a restaurant to have dinner. She was welcomed by a waitress at the restaurant. She noticed that the waitress was about eight months pregnant and yet working cheerfully so late at night. She had her dinner and while paying the bill remembered what Bryan Anderson had said. She paid the bill and when the waitress went to the counter to get the change, this old lady left the restaurant. When the waitress returned with the change, she found a note on the table, “I have been where you are and someone very kind once helped me the way I’m helping you now. Please just remember **to pay the love forward!**” When the waitress looked closer, she realized the elderly woman had gifted her a very generous tip.

Of late, social psychologists are trying to unravel the mystery behind such type of prosocial behavior. Why do people help total strangers, even when the stranger has not asked for such help, especially if they themselves have received such help in the past from a total stranger? Jung et.al. (2014) conducted many studies on this phenomenon called “paying it forward”.

In one of their studies, they exposed visitors to the museum to one of the two conditions. In one condition, i.e., pay-what-you-wish condition, visitors were told that they could pay any amount they wished for their entry to the museum. In the second condition, i.e., pay-it-forward condition, they were told that somebody else has paid for their admission, but if they want they can pay for someone else’s admission. Results indicated that in the first condition, i.e., pay-what-you-wish condition, those who were not helped by a stranger paid only \$2.19 while those who were helped by a stranger paid \$3.07. This indicated that the pay-it - forward effect did occur.

In another similar study, they informed the participants that someone else has already paid for their coffee, and if they want, they can pay someone

else's coffee now. They got the similar results as in the previous study. They paid more for the coffee, if they were informed that a stranger had already paid for their coffee.

One of the reasons for 'pay it forward' can be that people feel pressured to behave in a similar fashion as the stranger. Another reason can be that receiving help from a total stranger makes them think about others' generosity and they overestimate such generosity. Whatever may be the reason, 'pay it forward' phenomenon shows that prosocial behavior is influenced by many different factors and some of them may be very astonishing.

8.7 WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT HOW PEOPLE REACT TO BEING HELPED

So far, we have been discussing factors that lead to increased or decreased helping behavior and the focus has been on potential helpers. We have taken it for granted that prosocial behavior is good and will be appreciated by all. We have not paid attention to the cognitive and affective reactions of the receiver of help. Will he/she be thankful, which we normally expect or will he/she will react negatively? Psychologists have tried to unravel this mystery and come to the conclusion that the reaction of the person receiving help depends upon whether he really needed the help or was given unsolicited help.

Generally, people who are in need of help are grateful and appreciative when they receive help, but receiving help can lead to some negative emotions too. Prosocial behavior does not always produce positive reactions, sometimes it can lead to opposite effects. There are various reasons for generating these negative emotions in the person receiving help.

DePaulo Brown et.al. (1981) concluded from their study that sometimes helping behavior can threaten the self-esteem of the receiver of help, especially when the receiver does not believe that he/she needs help and still the help is given or even forced on that person, that person will react to such help with irritation and anger. For instance, when parents offer help to their teenager or adult children who believe that they can take care of themselves.

Another reason for negative reactions of a person receiving help is that helping behavior indirectly indicates that the helper is superior to the one who is receiving help.

Nadler & Halabi (2006) pointed out that when we help another person, it indicates that we have more resources and we can give some of them to the needy person. These resources can be in terms of money, physical strength, intellect, knowledge, status, social support, etc. But it indicates to the receiver of our help that we have higher status and power than him and this becomes a potentially self-threatening experience for him. He may experience embarrassment and worry about being seen as incompetent or

dependent. When the helper takes control of the situation and solves the problem facing the individual, leaving little for the individual to accomplish on his/ her own, the behavior may be seen as indicating that the individual cannot help herself. The potential recipients of help are likely to reject offers of **dependency-oriented help**, avoid seeking such help, and react negatively when it is offered. That's why very often, people prefer to go through hardships rather than seek help.

However, if the receiver of help believes that the person giving help sincerely cares for him and his well-being, then negative reactions will get mitigated. Alternatively, if **Autonomy-oriented help** is given which shows that the helper believes that the receiver of help can help himself if he is given appropriate tools or directions (Brickman, 1982). Autonomy-oriented help allows the receiver of help to maintain his independence even if he is dependent on the more resourceful helper. This type of help is less likely to clash with the recipients' view of himself as capable person who can help himself.

On the other hand, how the receiver of help reacts determines whether he/she will receive help in future or not. Whenever people help others, they expect at least an indication of gratitude in return. For example, a sincere 'Thank you'. If they don't receive any expression of gratitude from the recipient, their chances of helping them in future diminishes. Grant & Gino (2010) stated that a simple expression of gratitude from the recipient of help increases the helper's self-worth, they feel valued and appreciated and are more likely to help in future to experience such positive emotions. To test this idea, they conducted a study. The participants were given the task of editing a job application letter of another student. After editing the letter, they met the person whom they have helped. Actually, that person was just a confederate of experimenters. Two situations were created. In one situation, the confederate thanked the actual subject for editing the job application letter and thus helping him. In the second condition, the confederate did not thank the actual participant for helping him. After that, actual participants were asked to edit another job application letter from the same person. As was expected, those participants who were thanked for their previous help, were willing to spend more time in editing the second letter while those who had not received any expression of gratitude were not ready to spend more time in editing the second letter.

This clearly indicates that giving and receiving help is not a simple procedure. The reactions of a person receiving help and the reactions of a person giving help can be both positive or negative.

Check your Progress

1. Do men and women differ in their prosocial behavior?
2. Are prosocial behavior and aggressive behavior opposite of each other?
3. How do people react to receiving help?
4. Why does 'paying it forward' phenomenon takes place

8.8 SUMMARY

In this unit, we discussed how **bystander effect** and diffusion of responsibility hinders prosocial behavior in an emergency situation. The more the number of bystanders, the less the chances of each one of them providing help. This is because **pluralistic ignorance** takes place, where nobody knows whether the current situation is an emergency situation requiring action or not. Nobody wants to make a fool of himself in the eyes of others by overreacting. However, we also saw that if any one bystander takes a lead somehow, others take a cue from him and he becomes the **prosocial role model** and then others also pitch in with the help. Bystander effect takes place only when there are strangers present in an emergency situation and not when friends or known people are present. The reason being that communication, in terms of clarifying the need to help, takes place among them. In fact, the research shows that even those who play **prosocial video games** tend to be more helpful than those who play aggressive video games.

Other factors contributing to helping behavior were that we tend to help others who are **similar to us**, belonging to our own social groups such as same religion, profession, nationality, etc. It has been found that even our current emotions play an important role in deciding whether we will help or not. It is assumed that a person in a positive mood will help more than in a negative mood. But research shows that it is situation specific. Person in a very good mood will not help because he may fail to notice an emergency, the task involved in helping may be too difficult for him or may spoil his good mood. On the other hand, a person in a bad mood may help more if he is not in a negative mood, if there is absolutely no doubt that there is an emergency, and if the act of helping is satisfying and rewarding that will uplift his mood. It has been found that merely watching others performing a prosocial act generates a positive **feeling of elation** and that enhances the possibility of prosocial actions. Even if we experience a **feeling of awe**, it takes away our attention from ourselves and makes us realize how small or insignificant we are compared to what we are watching. This feeling of awe increases prosocial behavior.

There are **gender differences** in prosocial actions. Women are more helpful than men in some contexts such as nurturing relationships. These differences are as per the gender stereotypes. However, it has been scientifically proven that people belonging to lower socioeconomic strata tend to help more than people from higher socioeconomic class. So **social class** also determines prosocial behavior. But people in general, do not help if they experience **social exclusion** and rejection by their group. People who can hide behind **anonymity**, such as in **darkness** also have a tendency of not helping. In other words, if helping behavior will not get noticed and their social status will not get enhanced, then people will not help. They will not help, if the **economic cost** of helping in terms of the value of their time is high.

Furthermore, research points out that people tend to help a stranger more, if even without asking for help or expecting help, they have been helped by a total stranger, in the recent past. This is known as **‘paying it forward’**. **Crowdfunding** is a new form of prosocial behavior, where people make financial contributions so that entrepreneurs can start their businesses. These donors have no assurance of getting anything in return for that.

On the other hand, research also shows that people don’t like to receive unsolicited help and it irritates them, especially if it hurts their self-esteem and shows them as helpless, powerless people.

Finally, **prosocial acts and aggressive acts** may appear similar outwardly. We need to look at the intent or motive of the person to determine whether it was a helping behavior or an aggressive behavior.

8.9 QUESTIONS

1. Identify the factors that influence whether bystanders will help in an emergency situation or will not help.
2. Describe the key steps in deciding whether to help or not to help.
3. Enumerate and elaborate on the factors that increase people’s willingness to help.
4. What are the factors that decrease people’s willingness to help?
5. What are the factors that reduce helping?
6. Describe the relationship between prosocial behavior and antisocial behavior.
7. Write short notes on the following:
 - a) Feeling of awe and prosocial behavior
 - b) Social status and prosocial behavior
 - c) Crowdfunding
 - d) Role of emotions in prosocial behavior
 - e) Gender and prosocial behavior
 - f) Prosocial behavior and aggression
 - g) Playing it forward in prosocial behavior

8.10 REFERENCES

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