

The Lecture Contains:

- ☰ How can we be more helpful?
- ☰ Viewpoint of persons who need help
- ☰ Personality and Demographic factors
- ☰ Perception of incompetence
- ☰ Value (independence and self-reliance)
- ☰ Face-to-face interactions
- ☰ Feelings after being helped?

How can we be more helpful?

- Thus far, in the lectures on prosocial behaviour, we have learnt about various theories, models and hypothesis that tend to explain it. However, when we examine the literature on prosocial behaviour, we also come across questions raised by social psychologists about whether simply studying the reasons for helping others is sufficient or there is a need to take the perspective of the people who need help. The two specific questions that this lecture deals with are :
 - What are the viewpoints of persons who need help or what are the factors that affect seeking help?
 - What are the feelings of people after being helped?



Viewpoint of persons who need help

- Social psychologists have found out through their research certain patterns of personality characteristics, demographic variables (e.g., age and gender etc.) and social situations associated with a needy person's decision about asking for help. Following are the factors :
- Shyness
- Gender
- Age
- Socio-economic status
- Perception of incompetence (similar other),
- Value (independence and self-reliance),
- Face-to-face interactions

Personality and Demographic factors

- DePaulo et al. (1989) noted that shy persons are not the ones who would readily ask for help particularly from the persons of opposite sex.
- As Nadler (1991) observed, gender, age and socio-economic status affect help-seeking behaviour. In general, female rather than males are more open to help seeking behaviour. Aged people, in comparison with youngsters, are more reluctant in asking for help. Also, people from lower socio-economic sections are more reluctant in asking for help in comparison with those from higher socio-economic stratum.



Perception of incompetence

- Social psychologists have noted the perception of one's own incompetence (particularly if the help is sought from a 'similar' other). One of the reasons why people generally do not seek help from a person of similar characteristics is that he/she would be viewed as weaker or more deficient in comparison with the helper. However, if the help is sought from a dissimilar person (e.g., in age or socio-economic status) than there is perception that the helper might be having more resources by virtue of that 'dissimilarity' and thus the comparison of weakness, incompetence or deficiency may not be appropriate.

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Value (independence and self-reliance)

- One's value orientation may play a significant role in seeking help. For example, particularly in the Western cultures, the values of independence and self-reliance may be taken as important part of life. Therefore, with a slight clue that one may be perceived as dependent (particularly for lacking certain skills or resources) if he/she asks for help, the help is not sought.



Face-to-face interactions

- According to Yates (1992), in the face-to-face interactions, there are chances that a victim or needy person's responses may be taken as inappropriate or a deficiency in character. This could be one of the reasons why the telephone helplines or radio programmes for counseling are preferred to face-to-face interaction by the needy persons.

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Feelings after being helped?

- According to Fisher et al. (1982), besides 'similarity' with the helper, another important factor that affects the feeling of the needy after being helped is whether the help involved applying important skills. Two possibilities that have been highlighted are negative and positive emotions that are dependent upon whether seeking help posed a threat to the needy person's self-esteem :

1. Help by a friend/sibling/similar strangers involving important skills → high threat to self-esteem → Negative emotional reaction

2. Help by a dissimilar stranger/disliked person involving unimportant skills → low threat to self-esteem → Positive emotional reaction

