



# PSYCHO-SOCIAL CORRELATES OF PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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## ABSTRACT

Prosocial behavior is defined as 'voluntary behavior intended to benefit another' (Eisenberg et al., 1986). It is characterized by acts of kindness, compassion, and helping behaviors, which many consider to be one of the finest qualities of human nature. Typical examples of prosocial behavior include volunteering, sharing toys, treats or food with friends, instrumental help (e.g., helping a peer with school assignments), costly help (e.g., risking own life to save others), and emotionally supporting others in distress (e.g., comforting a peer following a disappointing experience or caring for a person not feeling well). Empathy is considered as the emotion that provides both the foundation for prosocial development and the mechanism for social influence over behavior (Hastings et al., 2007).

**KEYWORDS:** Pro-social Behaviour, Psycho-Social, Helping Behaviour.

Pro-social Behaviour is a super ordinate category that includes different kinds of behaviors, for example, helping, sharing, and comforting, as well as behaviors enacted for diverse reasons. Prosocial behavior can be motivated by a host of factors, including egoistic concerns (e.g., the desire for reciprocity, a concrete reward, or social approval, or the desire to alleviate one's own aversive emotional arousal), practical concerns (e.g., the desire to prevent waste of goods), other-oriented concern (e.g., sympathy), or moral values (e.g., the desire to uphold internalized moral values such as those related to the worth or equality of all people or a responsibility for others). *Altruistic behaviors*—a subtype of prosocial behavior—often are defined as prosocial behaviors motivated by other-oriented or moral concerns/emotion rather than egoistic or pragmatic concerns (Eisenberg, 1986).

In the decade 1960-70 six major works on positive social behaviour produced by behavioural scientists; Gouldner (1960) contributed his classic article on reciprocity norms. Berkowitz and Daniels (1963) established the legitimacy of investigating helping behaviour under laboratory conditions. Campbell (1965) had the temerity to use the philosophical term 'altruism' in psychology. Latane and Darley (1970) work on the unresponsive bystander captured the imagination of behavioural science. The American association for the advancement of science awarded its prestigious prize in 1968 to Latane and Darley for their work on bystander intervention.

The first terminological distinction is between the broad category of pro-social behaviour and other types of behaviours (i.e antisocial and non-social acts). Gartner and Clark (1981) suggest, pro social behaviour means no more and no less, than behaviour that is valued by the individual's society. Assisting others

donating to charity, cooperating with others, and intervening to save another person's life are all acts that societies generally value. In some instances, however, there may be inconsistencies in the standards that different societies apply to evaluate behaviour, "Good Samaritan" laws that required citizens to come to the aid of others were legislated in Nazi Germany: one purpose was to enlist the assistance of citizens in the government's campaign against law.

Helping behaviour can be considered to be a subcategory of prosocial behaviour. Helping behaviours are defined as voluntary acts performed with the intent to provide some benefit to another person. These behaviours may or may not require personal contact with the recipient and they may or may not involve anticipation of external rewards. It is important to note that this definition is based on the perspective of the benefactor. It is possible that the recipient does not share the benefactor's perception of benefit or that the action does not actually improve the welfare of the recipient. Thus, in practice, helping behaviour generally refers to apparently intentional acts that either seem to or actually do benefit the recipient. The term altruism is reserved for a special type of helping that involves favourable consequences for the recipient, an intent to help by the benefactor, no obvious external reinforcement and a motivation "directed towards the end-state goal of increasing the other's welfare" (Batson and Coke, 1981 p. 173).

## **DETERMINANTS OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

For pro-social intervention in emergency situation victims cry for help plays an important role. If the victims' plea is haunting, people easily become ready for help. Clark and Baird, (1972-74) expressed on the basis of their experimental study if people hear anyone's cry from adjacent room, they easily offered help while information of an emergency from any person did not create previous effect. In the study of Shotland and Huston (1979) two types of emergency indicating requests were done, first type was stating severe emergency, while second one was normal request. As a result 64% helped in emergency request while only 45% persons helped in normal request. If people think that victim is in problematic situation due to his own mistake and carelessness, he would receive lesser help in comparison to the situation in which the victim is not responsible for his condition as well as have no control over the circumstances (Mayer and Mulherin 1980). The presence of other bystander and the relationship between a bystander and a victim influences helping behaviour. Latane and his associates (Latane, Nida and Wilson, 1981) report that in 48 out of 56 comparisons people who were in the presence of confederates or who merely believe that other people were present helped less frequently than did people who were alone. Diffusion of the responsibility refers to a bystander's willingness either consciously or unconsciously to accept or deny personal responsibility for intervening. When bystanders believe that someone else can help, the pressure that any given bystander must intervene if the victim is to be rescued is reduced. A review by Pillavin et al. (1981) of 10 experiments that manipulated the conditions for diffusion to occur reveals additional supporting evidence. Awareness of the presence of other capable bystander generally inhibits or delays intervention. In addition Berkowitz (1978) demonstrates that diffusion of responsibility operates in non-emergency situations by minimizing feelings of personal responsibility for helping.

Similarly Solomon, Solomon and Stone (1978) showed that the inhibiting effect of other bystanders was more pronounced when subjects only heard the sounds of an emergency than when they could both see and hear the incident. Furthermore, social comparison theory suggests that individuals would be more influenced by the reactions of people who are similar to them than of people who are dissimilar to them. Smith, Smythe and Lien (1972) found that although subjects with a passive confederate helped less often when an emergency occurred than did subjects who were alone, the inhibiting effect of the confederate was much greater when the passive confederate was described as similar to the subject rather than as dissimilar.

Several investigators have developed models of helping behaviour specifically to explain the effects of the presence of others on bystander intervention (e.g., Morgan, 1978). Other researchers have attempted to apply more general models such as the social impact theory (Latane, 1981), objective self-awareness theory

(Wegner and Schaefer, 1978) and normative theory (Schwartz and Howard 1981, 82). If a bystander come to believe that someone else has intervened or will intervene, then costs for not helping are reduced because the victim will not be left to suffer. In addition, because arousal is hypothesized to be associated with the victim's distress, the belief that the victim could be or is being aided should also lower the bystander's arousal. Gaertner and Dovidio (1977) found that bystanders who overheard an emergency alone showed more arousal in response to the accident than did bystanders who believed that other bystanders were present. If the social information provided by the face-to-face presence of other inhibits helping by influencing bystanders' perceptions of the seriousness of the situation, then within the arousal; cost-reward framework both personal costs for not helping and empathic costs for the victim receiving no help may be affected. Gaertner et al. (1982) found the expected decrease in subject ' speed of intervention as a function of the presence of face-to-face passive confederate bystanders. Thus, increased arousal due only to the emergency led to faster intervention; arousal beyond that level which was attributable to normative pressures produced a hesitancy to intervene.

Social Norms to occur Pro-socialistic activity several researchers have referred to social norms to explain the motivation underlying helping behaviours. The normative theories emphasize that people help others because they have expectations based on previous social learning or the current behaviour of others that it is the socially appropriate response.

Two type of norms related to helping have generally been proposed. The first type which Karylowski (1982) terms "norms of aiding" refers to a wide spread norm that people are supposed to help a person who is dependent upon them. Berkowitz (1972) calls this the norm of social responsibility and Leeds (1963) refers to it as the norm of giving. The second type of norms that has received considerable empirical attention in the helping behaviour literature is related to feelings of fairness. Gouldner (1960) proposed a norm of reciprocity.

## **SELF-CONCEPT AND HELPING**

Karylowski (1982) propose that, in general, there are two type of motivations that mediate helping behaviour; exocentric and endocentric motivation. In exocentric motivation, attention is focused on the need of another person. Improvement in the other's condition, regardless of the cause is inherently rewarding. Batson's (see Batson and Coke, 1981) conceptualization of empathic concern fits nicely into the exocentric motivation category. In endocentric motivation attention is focused on the self and self's moral standards, and therefore, improvement in another person's condition is reinforcing only if the individual has an instrumental role in alleviating the other's distress . Karylowski's (1982) suggests that Berkowitz's (1972) social norm approach and Schwartz's ( 1977) personal norms framework represent. endocentric approaches to helping behaviour. An implication of Karylowski's conceptualization of endocentric motivation is that person may sometimes offer assistance primarily to reaffirm a self-image as a caring, helping individual. Thus, general self-image, as well as social expectations and personal moral standards may mediate helping behaviour.

## **THEORIES OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

### **SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY**

Social exchange theory is merely a general theory with which not only social behaviour but also other types of social behaviours are explained. This theory was proposed by Thibaut & Kelley (1959, 1978). The notion of this theory is that "Human interactions are guided by social economics". People not only exchange their money and articles but also exchange social goods as - affection, love and services. According to social exchange theory people want to achieve maximum rewards and minimizing its cost. It is called 'Minimax Strategy' by social psychologists. According to the theory after evaluating benefit or loss, people decide to

help or not to help. According to Piliavin (1981) it is called "Bystanders Calculus". It is enunciated by the theory that prosocial behaviour is based on reward-cost analysis.

## **REACTANCE THEORY**

Another approach used to explain phenomena associated with the receipt of help is reactance theory (Brehm, 1966; Brehm and Brehm, 1981). Its use is linked to the fact that help can pose explicit or implicit restrictions on the recipient's freedom for future action (e.g. Briar, 1966). Reactance theory suggests that to the extent that these restrictions exist (e.g. the helpers specifies how help is to be used, or the recipient feels he or she has to act kindly towards the benefactors), a negative affective state (reactance) is aroused.

## **ATTRIBUTION THEORIES**

A cursory scan of social psychology since 1965 reveals that hardly any area has failed to note the heuristic implications of attribution theories (e.g. Jones and Davis, 1965). Work on reactions to aid is no exception. Several studies have employed the theory of correspondent inferences to predict the conditions that precipitate attribution of pro-social or ulterior motivation for the donor's help. (Gergen & Gergen, 1971).

## **SOCIO-BIOLOGICAL THEORY**

The genetic determinism model is based on a more general theory of human behaviour. Rushton (1989) and other evolutionary psychologists stress that we are not conscious of why we respond to genetic influences; but they hypothesize we do so in many situations, including those that involve prejudice, attraction, mate selection, aggression and helping. Archer (1991) points out that all sociobiological theories are based on the theory of natural selection. As with physical attributes, any behaviour that increases an individual's ability to reproduce successfully will be represented in subsequent generations more frequently than a behaviour that is irrelevant to reproductive success or that interferes with reproduction.

## **CONCLUSION**

Prosocial behavior is a conducted or planned action to help other people, disregarding the helper's motives. It involves sincere assistance (altruism) which is entirely motivated by self-interest. Prosocial activities are any conducted or planned action to help other people without expecting anything in return (Afolabi, 2013). Prosocial activities involve attention and assistance towards other people, or devotion (love, loyalty, service) which are given to other people without any expectation to get something in return (Myers, 1996). Numerous theorists and researchers have suggested that empathy and sympathetic concern (early writers often did not differentiate the two) often motivate altruism (e.g., Batson, 1991; Eisenberg, 1986; Hoffman, 1975). For example, Batson (1991) argued that sympathy is associated with the desire to reduce another's distress or need and therefore is likely to result in altruistic behavior. As already noted, Batson further proposed that personal distress, because it is an aversive feeling, is associated with the egoistic desire to reduce one's own distress. Often people may reduce feelings of personal distress by avoiding contact with the needy or distressed other if it is possible to do so without too great a cost (e.g., strong social disapproval). Batson argued that individuals who experience personal distress would be expected to assist others only when that is the easiest way to reduce the helper's own distress.



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