

BLOCK 3
INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES



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INTRODUCTION

The present block consists of two units. In the *first unit*, you will come to know about the concept and process of interpersonal attraction. You will also understand the various factors of interpersonal attraction and the concept of pro-social behaviour. In the end of the unit, we will also discuss about the various motivational factors of pro-social behaviour and the factors affecting pro-social behaviour.

The *second unit* of this block discusses about the concept and various theoretical approaches of aggression. It also explains the various factors that affect aggression as well as the strategies and techniques to reduce aggression. The unit also tries to explain the nature, causes and steps to reduce bullying behaviour.



UNIT 6 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION AND PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR*

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept and process of interpersonal attraction;
- Describe various factors of interpersonal attraction;
- Define pro-social behaviour and explain its types;
- Explain various motivational factors of pro-social behaviour; and
- Discuss various factors affecting pro-social behaviour.

* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings have been defined as *social animal*. The term ‘animal’ has been used because of the biological processes associated with us. But the term ‘social’ has a lot to say about nature of human beings. Have you ever thought if the human were made to grow and live in isolation? Obviously, you cannot imagine that how our life would have been if we didn’t have so many people around us. Human infants are born with an inbuilt motivation and ability to seek contact with their social world. Interaction with others is so essential that lack of it can cause a lot of psychological disorder. Think about the punishment of *kala pani*. The prisoners of *kala pani* suffered a state of social exclusion in the Cellular Jail of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This made them face many psychological disorders. Some of them even died during it.

6.2 INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

Attraction is a step ahead of interaction. More than interpersonal relation, the interpersonal attraction is prolonged relationship based on liking between two persons. We cannot say that interaction is the necessary or sufficient condition for developing attraction but for an attraction to develop into a fruitful relationship, a healthy interaction is mandatory. In fact, all the motives of interaction can be achieved only if there is some sort of attraction between the interacting partners.

6.3 INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRACTION

6.3.1 The Need to Affiliate

The tendency to affiliate and associate with others has a biological basis (Rowe, 1996). In terms of social psychology, it is as basic to a human survival as hunger and thirst. The latter ones being important for our physical survival but the former one is important to our psychological well-being.

Individual Differences in Need to Affiliate

Different individuals have different intensity of desires to affiliate with others and to form relations. You might find that some people around you are very sociable and extrovert who always prefers to be in company of others; whereas some people prefer to be alone. This difference might result from genetics of a person or it may stem from his or her life experiences. This tendency forms a relatively stable trait which remains more or less unchanged for the whole lifespan of an individual. When this need is not fulfilled, an individual develops a feeling of being ignored, social exclusion and lost control over one’s environment leading to increased sensitivity to interpersonal information (Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000). Alternatively, this tendency may vary within same individual from time to time. We also may want to be alone some time. In fact, we maintain the social contact to an extent which is optimal for us at a particular instance (O’Connor & Rosenblood, 1996).

Social psychologists have been pondering upon the universality of the need to affiliate and associate with other people. On one hand, some social psychologists claim that need to affiliate is a very strong one and almost all people display them (Baumeister & Twenge, 2003). On the other hand, a different viewpoint claims that there is no such universal need to affiliate to others. Rather they claim that some people avoid close relationships; termed as *dismissing-avoidant attachment style* (Collins & Feeney,

2000). However, some recent studies (Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006) have supported the view that all the people have a strong need to affiliate. They may hide it, claim otherwise, or display it in some other ways depending upon their culture; but they cannot deny its existence.

Situational Influences on Need to Affiliate

Many external events may also influence the need to affiliate. For example, affiliation, friendliness and cheerful behaviour have been found to increase as a result of natural disasters. At such times, people tend to help, cooperate and comfort one another. Schachter (1959) revealed that people facing such troubles tend to interact with those who are facing similar problems rather than interacting with those not facing such problems. One possible reason for such affiliation with similar people may be that during troubled time people seek social comparison. Such comparisons provide them '*cognitive clarity*' (know what is happening) and '*emotional clarity*' (know how does it feel). With such comparisons, they compare their perceptions with those of others which further lead them to reduce uncertainty.

6.3.2 Influence of Affect on Attraction

Presence of specific emotions has very prominent effect on our evaluation of other persons and things around us. A basic principle suggests that positive affect leads to positive evaluation and negative affect leads to negative evaluation. Emotions can affect our evaluation either directly or indirectly.

Direct Influence

In India, we frequently come across elections, either for central legislature, provincial legislature or some other local body elections. During such periods, various candidates visit us for canvass. No matter how ill named, rude and notorious those candidates are in their real lives, but when it comes to elections they talk nicely, behave gently and project themselves as your only well-wisher. Similarly, the sales person in a showroom is very gentle to us or an insurance agent talks very nicely to us. A general thumb rule is that we tend to like a person who is nice to us and makes us feel good rather than those who is a contrary (Ben-Porath, 2002).

Indirect Influence

One even more surprising influence of emotions on our likes and dislikes come from the principles of classical conditioning. When we are in a positive mood we evaluate a person or a thing present at that time in a positive way and when we are in a negative mood we evaluate a person or a thing present at that time in a negative way (Berry & Hansen, 1996). Application of this principle has been frequently seen in the advertisements where a positive mood is induced before presenting the target product.

These principles are more prominent with a stranger or with a person or a thing we do not know very well, such as a guy from some other section of your class with whom you have a casual relation or a product you have not used before. With a well acquainted person there is a pre-existing opinion whether you like him or her or do not like. Also, these principles do not work in absolutism. There are many other factors, such as your belief systems, cultural biases, stereotypes, etc., which guide your likes and dislikes towards a person. For example, you will never positively evaluate a stranger belonging to a community towards which you have cultural biases and negative stereotypes; no matter how positive your mood is or how nicely he or she is talking to you.

6.4 EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRACTION

6.4.1 Proximity: *Mere Exposure Effect*

Two persons are likely to know each other if their physical environment repeatedly brings them into contact. Furthermore, persons who are physically closer are expected to develop attraction towards to each other; presumably because repeated exposure to any new stimulus results in positive evaluation of that stimulus (Zajnoc, 1965). The *mere exposure effect* suggests that something seen multiple times elicits positive response. A possible explanation for mere exposure effect may be that unfamiliar and unknown stimuli are considered as uncomfortable and possibly dangerous because of uncertainty about their behaviour (Zajnoc, 2001). However, repeated exposure reduces unpredictability about the stimulus leading to enhanced positive emotions toward it (Lee, 2001). Moreland and Beach (1992) demonstrated the mere exposure effect in a classroom setting. They reported that the lab assistants who attended the class for more number of days were rated higher on the liking scale by students than those who attended the class for lesser number of days.

However, the phenomenon of repeated exposure fails to operate if your initial response towards a stimulus is negative. In such a case, repeated exposure acts contrary and elicits negative response (Swap, 1977). The principles of proximity and repeated exposure also do not operate if you have some pre-existing beliefs, stereotypes and attitudes towards the person in contact. Furthermore, in the present scenario of virtual world and social media, these principles of proximity have faded down and do not appear to be that much important; however, in the physical and real world they still have their significance.

6.4.2 Observable Characteristics: Physical Attractiveness

Not only familiarity, evoked by repeated exposure, elicits positive affect but positive affect may also elicit a perception of familiarity leading to increased chances of interpersonal attraction (Monin, 2003). Sometimes you may feel attracted towards someone at the first sight whom you do not know, neither have you had any personal contact with that person. This increases the probability that you will approach that person and thus the likelihood of developing attraction is enhanced. Contrary to this, if you dislike a person at first sight, you tend to avoid any further contact with that person. Such likes or dislikes at the first sight, based upon your past experiences, beliefs and biases, are often inaccurate (Andreolletti, Zebrowitz, Lachman, 2001). Physical appearance may be one of the most misleading cues about someone's inner personality; yet, it is a very powerful factor to initiate relationship between two individuals and whether knowingly or unknowingly, your decisions are affected by such cues.

It has been found that people associate qualities like interesting, sociable, dominant, exciting adjusting, skilled, successful, masculine/feminine, etc. with attractive men and women (Dion & Dion, 1991). Although, these associations may be incorrect, misleading and illogical; yet, researchers have found that attractiveness is usually associated with popularity, high self-esteem and good interpersonal skills (Diener, Wolsic & Fujita, 1995). Though, attractiveness may not have any direct influence on these qualities; the attractive people have usually been treated well by others.

Just like the cues of physical attractiveness, there may also be some other superficial and observable characteristics that influence the onset of communication and attraction. The first one of them is clothing. Both neatness and colour of the cloths have effects on

attractiveness of the person leading to attraction of other interacting persons. Furthermore, people react positively to youthful walking style, firm handshake, animated behaviour and modest persons. Person's physique also triggers various emotional reactions and differential attraction. For example, round and fat body indicates sad and sloppy person; hard and muscular body indicates good health and lack of intelligence; thin and angular body indicates intelligence and fearfulness (Ryckman, Robbins, Kaczor & Gold, 1989). Apart from this, various other visible characteristics such as any form of physical disability, mental illness, perceived age, beard and eyeglasses, etc. influence attraction.

Since physical appearance has a significant influence on the initiation of interpersonal communication and thus attraction; people are sensitive to their appearance. However, the level of sensitivity may vary from person to person and from time to time within the same person. Even the most attractive people also have this feeling. This is what we call **appearance rejection sensitivity**, worrying about one's own appearance and fearing that others may ignore them because they do not look good (Park & Pelham, 2006).

6.5 INTERPERSONAL FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRACTION

6.5.1 Similarity

Suppose you go to some foreign country, you will be very glad to see some Indian there and will readily befriend him or her, suggesting that we always search for matches. When we are in out-group, we search for anyone who is in-group to us. And when we are in our group, we search for someone who shares beliefs and attitudes with us. Various studies conducted on friends and spouses have revealed that great amount of similarity between them (Hunt, 1935). This positive correlation could mean both ways, i.e. liking for each other in the pair leads to the development of similarity or the similarity between them causes them to like each other. Study published by Newcomb (1956) revealed that, it is the similarity which is a good predictor of liking between two individuals. In his experiment, he measured the attitudes of students on various issues before they joined the university. Once the students joined the university, he assessed their likings for each other. By the end of the semester, it was found that strength of their liking for each other was highly correlated with the initial similarity of their attitudes.

Presumably, similarity evokes positive feelings and dissimilarity evokes negative feelings. Similarity not only leads to attraction but also have many other effects. We tend to evaluate similar people as more intelligent, better informed, high on moral values and better adjusted than the dissimilar people (Byrne, 1961). This consideration of similarity and dissimilarity in initiating attraction has not just been a subjective phenomenon. Byrne & Nelson (1965) demonstrated **proportion of similarity** and suggested that it is mathematical value obtained on dividing the '*number of topics on which two people have similar views*' by the '*total number of topics on which two peoples have communicated*'. Higher the value of this term, greater the liking is. The effect of this proportion is very prominent and found to be true regardless of the number of topics on which views are expressed or how trivial the topics are. Furthermore, it appears applicable across gender, cultural age and educational differences.

However, the genesis of attraction between two individuals is not so simple that in can be predicted by using a single mathematical formula. For example, if you have a new classmate with the views similar to that of yours on sports, music and religious practices. But the only difference you find that you love to be serious and quiet most of the time; whereas he or she is extremely talkative. Considering such situations, Rosenbaum (1986)

proposed *repulsion hypothesis* which states that similar attitude does not increase attraction. Instead, it is dissimilarity which causes repulsion between two people. By considering a mathematical formula as used above, it becomes impossible to segregate the effect of similarity and dissimilarity.

Although similarity has been found to be a good predictor of attraction, dissimilarity between two persons has not been as a repulsion factor in all instances. For example, if you are a dominant person, you would naturally like to befriend a submissive person. Here, dissimilarity will not cause repulsion between two people. Some evidences have been reported that in case of interaction between a female and a male, there are fair chances that dominating and submissive partners may get attracted towards each other.

Social psychologists have been exploring that why similarity causes attraction and dissimilarity causes repulsion. Why does similarity elicit positive feelings; whereas dissimilarity evokes negative feelings? Various propositions have been put forward to answer this question. Applying *balance theory* (Heider, 1958) to friendship development, Newcomb (1961) has argued that people have a natural tendency to organise their likes and dislikes in a symmetrical way. Similarity of thoughts, ideas, attitudes, etc., between two persons constitutes a state of balance which is emotionally pleasing to both the persons. Similarly, discovering dissimilarity in some respect causes imbalance which is emotionally unpleasant. An imbalanced state drives individuals to restore balance by any of the three methods: causing one of them to change or to misperceive the dissimilarity or by developing dislikes each other.

Festinger's (1954) *social comparison theory* suggests that we tend to compare our thoughts, beliefs and attitudes with those of others in order to validate them. This may be a highly misleading way of verifying the authenticity of our decisions, yet it is highly used. When we find someone else thinking like us, it enhances our confidence in our beliefs. Contrary to this, if we find others holding an opposite attitude, we feel that we are not correct and tend to recheck our thoughts and beliefs. It is argued that in order to ensure 'accuracy' of our thoughts, beliefs and attitudes, we tend to socially adhere to the people who hold the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes similar to us.

The third approach to explain the effect of similarity and dissimilarity on attraction is *adaptive response* proposed by Gould (1996). This theory is evolved from evolutionary perspective which presumes that anything that is not similar to us is a potential danger to us. Thus, it is an inherent tendency in the human being to accompany people with similarity and to stay away from dissimilar people.

6.5.2 Reciprocity: Mutual Liking

Sometimes, we like people just because they like us and are nice to us. You must have encountered this technique several times in your life. Though reciprocal liking is often taken in negative ways in terms of flattery, teacher's pet or boss's pet, sometimes a person may genuinely like the other person and this compels the second person to develop a liking for the first person. Research findings have shown that this proves to be a powerful technique in gaining favours and likings (Condon & Crano, 1988).

Self Assessment Questions 1

Fill in the following blanks:

- 1) Not only familiarity, evoked by repeated exposure, elicits positive affect but..... may also elicit a perception of familiarity leading to increased chances of interpersonal attraction.

- 2) Newcomb (1961) has argued that people have a natural tendency to organise their likes and dislikes in a way.
- 3) Two persons are likely to know each other if their repeatedly brings them into contact.
- 4) More than interpersonal relation, the is prolonged relationship based on liking between two persons.
- 5) The tendency to affiliate and associate with others has a basis (Rowe, 1996).

6.6 PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: DEFINITION AND TYPES

During the recent flood in Kerala, you might have seen various groups of people visiting door-to-door to collect relief materials, such as food, cloths, medicines, etc., from various parts of the country. Thousands of people from various parts of the country rushed to the flood affected areas in Kerala and volunteered themselves in rescue operations. You might have also seen certain people helping a blind or old person to cross a busy traffic on road. All these behaviours are examples of some most beautiful aspects of our social life: pro-social behaviour. In general, pro-social behaviour is defined as an intentional act or behaviour of an individual which benefits some other person or society at the larger level, despite that the behaviour does not provide any immediate benefit to the helper.

Psychologists have proposed a fine distinction between simple *helping behaviour* and a specific act of *altruism*. Many times, we help others only to benefit him or her and our only motive behind helping behaviour is to reduce the distress of the person in need. Such behaviours which are merely motivated by the desire to reduce the suffering of the person are called *altruism*. However, many times we engage ourselves in helping behaviours in expectation of some reward in return. Sometimes, this return may be intrinsic in nature; for example, personal satisfaction and increased self-esteem. The expected return may be something tangible as well, such as we donate to the *Prime Minister's National Relief Fund* so that we can get a tax deduction. Many times, we help others also because we think that it will create our positive impression in public. Whatsoever the reason, when the help is given in expectation of a reward, the behaviour is not truly altruistic and such behaviours are simply known as *helping behaviour*.

Thus, the difference between altruism and helping behaviour is drawn from the distinction in the motivation behind the behaviour and the mere outcome of the behaviour is not that important. A person may get rewarded for a behaviour entirely motivated to relieve the suffering of the victim. However, since the behaviour was not executed in expectation of any reward in return, the behaviour may be called altruism.

6.7 MOTIVATION BEHIND PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In any given situation, only few people come across to help the person in need. Moreover, all persons do not engage themselves in helping behaviour to the same extent. Even a person who offers help to someone at sometime; fails to offer help to somebody else or at some other occasion. Social psychologists have proposed a number of hypotheses that explain the motives that govern our pro-social behaviours.

6.7.1 Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis

Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, as proposed by Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, and Birch (1981), assumes that we are engaged in a pro-social behaviour because when we see someone in need an emotion of empathy is aroused. Empathy refers to a state in which a person feels and understands the situation with other person's perspective. This leads the person to show a genuine concern for the sufferings of the victim. Batson and colleagues have argued that when our helping behaviour is motivated by empathic consideration, we render our help even in situations where it involves dangerous and life-threatening activities. Gleason, Jensen-Campbell and Ickes (2009) suggested that empathy is a complex phenomenon consisting of emotional empathy (feelings and emotions with others' perspective), empathic accuracy (perceiving others' thoughts and feelings accurately) and empathic concern (concern for another's well-being). Batson, Early and Salvarani (1997) demonstrated that thinking about a situation with other's perspective arouses empathic emotion which motivates us to help someone in need.

6.7.2 Negative-State Relief Model

Negative-state relief model (Cialdini, Baumann, & Kenrick, 1981), an approach opposite to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, proposes that our pro-social behaviour is motivated by our desire to reduce painful emotions. This model hypothesises that others' sufferings induce an unpleasant feeling in us and when we do something good for others or by helping others, we reduce our own unpleasant feeling and elevate positive emotions. Thus, without having empathy for the victim, our own negative emotions can guide us to pro-social behaviour. There have been some research reports indicating that the negative emotions aroused by something unrelated to the victim, such as own suffering, can also lead the person to pro-social behaviour (Fultz, Shaller, & Cialdini, 1988).

6.7.3 Empathic Joy Hypothesis

Another explanation of the motivational aspects of pro-social behaviour is *empathic joy hypothesis* (Smith, Keating, & Stotland, 1989). Empathic joy hypothesis assumes that helping others produces a positive impact on others and the victim, whom we help, also reacts back with positive gestures. This positive feedback for pro-social behaviour provides an empathic for the helper. Smith, Keating and Stotland (1989) demonstrated that merely empathic emotion or empathic concern could not lead the research participants to helping behaviour when empathic joy did not follow the helping behaviour. However, the research participants engaged themselves in helping behaviour when empathic joy was anticipated.

6.7.4 Competitive Altruism

Apart from being motivated by empathic concern or by need to reduce our own negative emotions or by our desire to have a positive impact on others in order to get empathic joy; *competitive altruism approach* proposes that by being engaged in the pro-social acts we are able to enhance our own significance, status and reputation in the society. Furthermore, this enhanced significance, status and reputation pays off the helper in many ways, such as importance in the society, public recognition, etc. These gains may not be always in tangible forms; however, they may motivate and lead a person to pro-social behaviours. For example, we see various streets, buildings, awards, welfare schemes, etc. named after some notable philanthropists, social workers and revolutionary personalities of our society.

6.7.5 Kin Selection Theory

Kin selection theory explains pro-social behaviour from evolutionary perspective that

as the species we are motivated to get our genes transferred into the next generation. Thus, this theory suggests that we are more likely to help those with whom we are genetically closer and linked than those we are not related. Research reports have indicated that participants were more inclined to help their close relatives than those who were distantly related or not related at all (Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994). Results also indicated that relatives younger in age, having more years of reproductive life, were more likely get help than those who were older in age, having either no or very less years of reproductive life.

6.8 THE BYSTANDER EFFECT: A FIVE STAGE MODEL OF HELPING BEHAVIOUR

Often we come across the situations where bystanders help the victims who are most of the time strangers to them. However, several stories in media are also reported about incidences in which bystanders remain passive and do not intervene. We find many incidences of road rage or molestation at a public place in which the victims do not get help from the bystanders.

Latané and Darley (1968) proposed a model suggesting that in such emergency situations, where immediate help is warranted, a bystander passes through five different stages and at every step he or she has to take a decision before helping the person in need. The model assumes that help is provided by the bystander only when he or she notices something unusual in the situation; perceives, interprets and construes the situation as an emergency and assumes responsibility for helping. Bystander must understand that he or she has the knowledge and skill required to give help and decides how to help and finally decides actually to the victim. The model, as shown in Figure 1, suggests that each stage of the helping behaviour has a decision process and the bystander must take a 'yes' decision at each stage in order to help the victim. A 'yes' decision at one stage does not guarantee that help will be provided; it simply allows the person to move to the next stage of the model. However, a 'no' decision at any of the five stages will lead to failure to help.

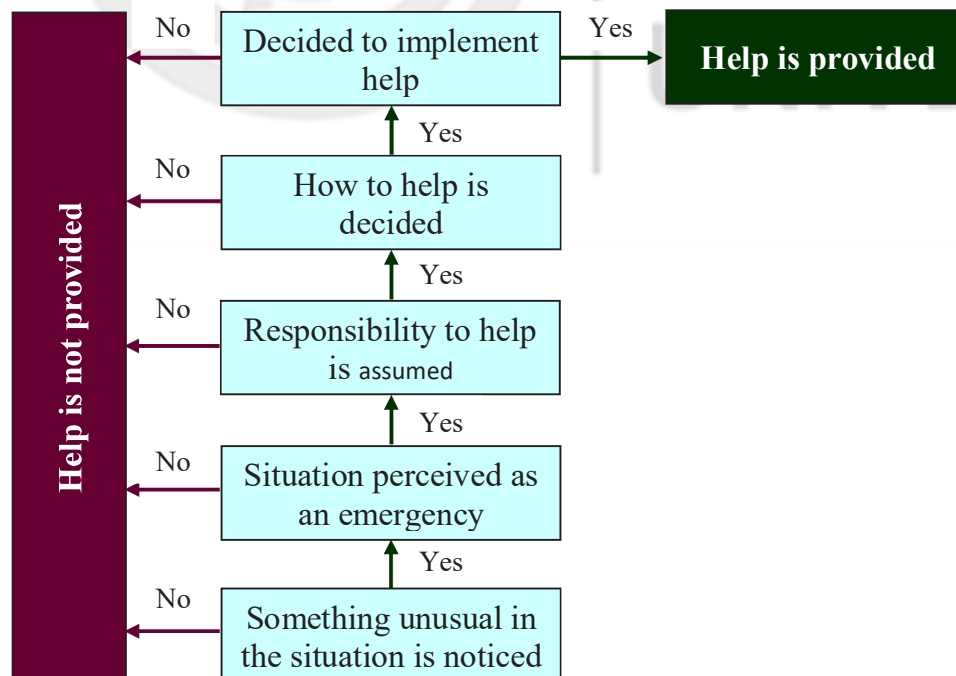


Fig. 6.1: Five stage model of helping behaviour (Latané & Darley, 1968)

- 1) ***Noticing something unusual in the situation:*** First of the five stages of helping behaviour in emergencies is noticing that there is something unusual or unexpected in the situation. For every social situation we generally have some schemas or cognitive structures that contain broader expectations and knowledge of the situation that help us systematically organise and process the information. Any given situation is noticed as unusual when it there is something remarkably distinguishing from our long held schema driven expectation in the situation. Every day we see numerous motor vehicles running on the roads. However, hearing somebody's cry from a passing car may lead us to notice something unusual in the situation. In case we fail to notice unusual in the situation, we will not move to the next stage of the decision process and help will not be provided.
- 2) ***Situation perceived as an emergency:*** Once the situation is noticed as unusual, the next step is to correctly perceive and interpret the situation and label it as an emergency that requires our intervention and help. Unless the situation is perceived as an emergency, we will not move to the next stage of the decision making process and help will not be provided. However, whether the situation will be perceived and labelled as emergency is largely determined by the level of ambiguity and uncertainty in the situation. If the situation involves great amount of ambiguity and uncertainty we wait for a while to collect some more information before we act. Ambiguity and uncertainty in the situation becomes more significance in the presence of multiple bystanders. Phenomenon of *pluralistic ignorance* suggests that an early action in an ambiguous situation in the presence of multiple bystanders may cause embarrassment to the person in case he or she misinterprets the situation and acts inappropriately. Thus, in the presence of multiple bystanders people hesitate to act and withhold the help.
- 3) ***Assuming responsibility to help:*** Noticing something unusual in the situation at the first stage and perceiving and labelling the situation as an emergency at the second stage do not guarantee that a bystander will intervene and provide help to the victim. Darley and Latané (1968) demonstrated that in the presence of multiple bystanders, people generally with hold help to the victim. They termed this phenomenon as bystander effect and further suggested that the likelihood of help being provided to the victim decreases with the increasing number of bystanders. Darley and Latané (1968) also demonstrated that reaction time to help the victim also increases with the increasing number of bystanders. They argued that in the presence of multiple bystanders, each bystander assumes that the action to help the victim will be initiated by the other bystanders, leading to a state of *diffusion of responsibility* and with holding help to the person in need. However, some recent evidences have suggested that the bystander effect does not occur when the situation involves very high potential danger to the victim and a clear violation of a social norm, such as sexual aggression (Fischer, Greitemeyer, Pollozek, & Frey, 2006).
- 4) ***Deciding how to help:*** Even after assuming responsibility to help, we may not initiate a helping action due to lack of knowledge, skill and competence required to take action in the situation. Many emergency situations require some specific knowledge, skill and competence in order to be helpful or the victim. For example, if you see somebody drowning in the swimming pool; you will provide help to the person unless you are a swimmer. Similarly, you will not help a person having a heart attack unless you are a medical professional. Presumably, feelings of competence increase confidence in one's ability to help and to know that what requires to be done in an emergency situation. Moreover, feeling of competence increases sensitivity to the needs of others and empathy toward victims.

- 5) ***Deciding to finally implement help:*** Although the first four stages are mandatorily required to pass through, they alone do not lead a person to helping behaviour. The person has still to take the final decision whether he will implement the helping behaviour or not. This final decision to execute helping behaviour is dependent on the person's evaluation about the rewards and costs in helping. There are potential rewards for helping (gratitude from the victim, monetary reward, recognition by peers, etc.) and for not helping (avoiding potential danger, arriving for an appointment on time, etc.). Similarly, there are costs for helping (possible injury, embarrassment, inconvenience, etc.) and for not helping (loss of self-esteem). Presumably, help is finally provided to the victim when the person finds that the rewards owing to the helping behaviour are greater than the costs. However, in case of greater costs involved in helping, likelihood of people providing help to the victim is reduced.

6.9 FACTORS AFFECTING PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Although social psychologists have been more interested in explaining the bystanders' behaviour that in some emergency situations they provide help to the victim, while at some other occasions they withhold help and do not take any action; psychologists have also studied a number of factors that either increase or decrease the tendency to help.

6.9.1 Similarity with the Victim

People are more likely to provide help to those who are close to them, such as family members, friends; as compared to the strangers. Studies have been reported indicating that an unknown victim is more likely to receive help if he or she is similar to the bystander in terms of age, nationality, ethnicity, etc. Hodges, Kiel, Kramer, Veach and Villaneuva (2010) have argued that we feel greater empathic concern for those who are similar to us. They have further suggested that similarity with the victim facilitates accuracy of understanding about the victim's sufferings and experiences; leading to increased likelihood of help being provided.

6.9.2 Attribution about the Victim's Sufferings

When we see a victim, we initially try to make attributions about the victim's suffering. Help being provided becomes less likely when we attribute the victim's sufferings to his or her internal factors, such as the victim's internal traits or personal habits. However, we tend to provide help to the victims whose sufferings are attributed to some external or environmental factors. For example, suppose we witness a person's car colliding into the road divider and when we approach the person, we find a bad smell of alcohol from the car. We certainly attribute that the accident was a case of drink and drive and therefore, the help being provided becomes less likely. Thinking according to the just-world hypothesis, a belief that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get, often leads us to lesser importance to the suffering of a person whom we think responsible for his or her own suffering. Generally, we tend not to help to the victim we perceive responsible for his or her own problems than to those we think innocent.

6.9.3 Pro-social Modelling

Consistent to the modelling of social learning approach, in the presence of a bystander who provides help to the victim, we also tend to provide help. Not only live pro-social models, research findings have suggested that playing pro-social video games can also

increase helping behaviour. Presumably, playing pro-social video games arouses pro-social thoughts and schemas and, consequently, activates attitudes and emotions leading to pro-social actions behaviours.

6.9.4 Gratitude

When a person receives recognition and appreciation for his or her pro-social act, it is more likely that he or she will help again to the same person, as well as to other people at subsequent occasions. It is believed that being recognised and appreciated enhances the helper's self-efficacy and self-worth which further lead the person to enhanced tendency of pro-social behaviours.

6.9.5 Interpersonal Relation and Connection with the Society

Research findings suggest that people with rich inter-personal relations and strong connection with the society tend to be more involved in pro-social behaviours than those who are socially excluded (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007). It is believed that people experiencing social exclusion have lesser empathic concern for others' sufferings leading to decreased tendency of pro-social behaviour.

Self Assessment Questions 2

State whether the following are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) When we see a victim, we never try to make attributions about the victim's suffering. ()
- 2) People are more likely to provide help to the strangers than to those who are close to them, such as family members, friends. ()
- 3) First of the five stages of helping behaviour in emergencies is noticing that there is something unusual or unexpected in the situation. ()
- 4) Such behaviours which are merely motivated by the desire to reduce the suffering of the person are called *altruism*. ()
- 5) When a person receives recognition and appreciation for his or her pro-social act, it is more likely that he or she will not help again. ()

6.10 LET US SUM UP

More than interpersonal relation, attraction is a prolonged relationship based on liking between two persons. Though it is common among human being, different people differ in their tendency to get attracted towards others and number of internal, external and interpersonal factors affect interpersonal attraction. The tendency to affiliate and associate with others is one important factor affecting interpersonal attraction. Different individuals have different intensity of desires to affiliate with others and for relations. Many external events, such as natural disasters or other common threats, may also influence the need to affiliate. Presence of positive affect has very prominent effect on our evaluation of other persons and things around us, leading to have a facilitate development of interpersonal attraction. Persons who are physically closer and have chance to meet repeatedly are expected to develop attraction towards to each other; presumably because repeated exposure to any new stimulus results in positive evaluation of that stimulus. Furthermore, good and attractive physical appearance also has a significant influence on the initiation of interpersonal communication and attraction. Social psychologists argue that similarity and reciprocity evokes positive feelings between people leading to develop interpersonal attraction.

Pro-social behaviour is defined as an intentional act or behaviour of an individual which benefits some other person or society at the larger level, despite that the behaviour does not provide any immediate benefit to the helper. Social psychologists have proposed a number of hypotheses that explain the motives that govern our pro-social behaviours. *Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis* assumes that we are engaged in a pro-social behaviour because when we see someone in need an emotion of empathy is aroused. *Negative-state relief model* proposes that our pro-social behaviour is motivated by our desire to reduce painful emotions. *Empathic joy hypothesis* assumes that helping others produces a positive impact on others and the victim, whom we help, also reacts back with positive gestures. *Competitive altruism approach* proposes that by being engaged in the pro-social acts we are able to enhance our own significance, status and reputation in the society. *Kin selection theory* explains pro-social behaviour from evolutionary perspective that as the species we are motivated to get our genes transferred into the next generation. Thus, we are more likely to help those with whom we are genetically closer and linked than those we are not related. A five stage model of helping behaviour suggests that in emergency situations where immediate help is warranted, a bystander passes through five different stages and at every step he or she has to take a decision before helping the person in need. Social psychologists have argued we tend to provide help to the victims whose sufferings are attributed to some external or environmental factors. Consistent to the modelling of social learning approach, in the presence of a bystander who provides help to the victim, we also tend to provide help. When a person receives recognition and appreciation for his or her pro-social act, it is more likely that he or she will help again to the same person, as well as to other people at subsequent occasions. Research findings also suggest that people with rich inter-personal relations and strong connection with the society tend to be more involved in pro-social behaviours than those who are socially excluded.

6.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Elucidate the meaning of interpersonal attraction and discuss the factors affecting interpersonal attraction.
- 2) Define pro-social behaviour and explain its types. Also discuss various motivational factors behind pro-social behaviour.
- 3) Critically evaluate Latané and Darley's five stage model of helping behaviour explaining the bystander effect.
- 4) Describe various factors that affect pro-social behaviour.

6.11 GLOSSARY

Interpersonal attraction	: A prolonged relationship between two persons based on liking for each other.
Need to affiliate	: Tendency to affiliate with others and to form relations.
Mere exposure effect	: Persons who are physically closer and have chance to meet repeatedly are expected to develop attraction towards to each other.
Appearance rejection sensitivity	: Worrying about one's own appearance and fearing that others may ignore them because they do not look good.

Interpersonal Processes

- Proportion of similarity** : A mathematical value obtained on dividing the 'number of topics on which two people have similar views' by the 'total number of topics on which two peoples have communicated'. Higher the value of this term, greater the liking is.
- Repulsion hypothesis** : Dissimilarity in terms of attitudes, values, beliefs and opinions causes repulsion between two people.
- Adaptive response** : A presumption that anything that is not similar to us is a potential danger leading to an inherent tendency to accompany people with similarity and to stay away from dissimilar people.
- Pro-social behaviour** : An intentional act or behaviour of an individual which benefits some other person or society at the larger level, despite that the behaviour does not provide any immediate benefit to the helper.
- Altruism** : A type of pro-social behaviour which is merely motivated by the desire to reduce the suffering of the person.
- Empathy-altruism hypothesis** : An assumption that we are engaged in a pro-social behaviour because when we see someone in need an emotion of empathy is aroused.
- Negative-state relief model** : A proposition that our pro-social behaviour is motivated by our desire to reduce painful emotions.
- Empathic joy hypothesis** : A hypothesis that helping others produces a positive impact on others and the victim, whom we help, also reacts back with positive gestures.
- Competitive altruism approach** : An assumption that by being engaged in the pro-social acts we are able to enhance our own significance, status and reputation in the society.
- Kin selection theory** : An explanation of pro-social behaviour from evolutionary perspective that as the species we are motivated to get our genes transferred into the next generation and therefore, we are more likely to help those with whom we are genetically closer and linked than those we are not related.

6.12 ANSWER TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) positive affect
- 2) symmetrical
- 3) physical environment

- 4) interpersonal attraction
- 5) biological

Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) False
- 2) False
- 3) True
- 4) True
- 5) False

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UNIT 7 HUMAN AGGRESSION*

Structure

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7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define aggression;
- Describe various theoretical approaches of aggression;

* Dr. Ari Sudan Tiwari, Scientist 'E', Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Ministry of Defence, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi-110054 (INDIA).

- Explain various factors that affect aggression;
- Discuss various strategies and techniques to reduce aggression; and
- Explain the nature, causes and steps to reduce bullying behaviour.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Aggression is one of the most primitive adaptive behaviour that has been used not only by human being, but also by other species. In the primitive societies, survival was dependent upon the ability to overpower the physical might of others by being hostile and aggressive towards them. However, technological advancements have brought about different more fatal, though easier, ways of expressing aggression. Now, there are many sophisticated weapons that are easily available and can be smoothly operated in interpersonal aggressive and hostile moments. Moreover, many weapons of mass destruction have been developed by nations and the world always faces fear that these weapons may be used by any country out of individual insanity and stupidity of dictatorial heads of some of these nations. Thus, aggression, anger and hostility form an extreme form of social behaviour and therefore, social psychologists have attempted to explore various aspects of aggression, such as the process of expression of aggressive behaviours, factors that affect aggression, strategies and techniques to reduce aggression, etc.

7.2 AGGRESSION: MEANING AND FORMS

Contrary to pro-social behaviour and interpersonal attraction; aggression, anger, violence and bullying behaviours represent a completely opposite axis of social behaviours. Aggression is defined as a behaviour that is aimed at producing physical or psychological harm to another person. Anderson and Bushman (2002) have defined human aggression as *“any behaviour directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behaviour will harm the target and that the target is motivated to avoid the behaviour”*. Bandura (1973) has defined aggression as *“a harmful behaviour which violates social conventions and which may include deliberate intent to harm or injure another person or object”*. Buss (1961) defined aggression as *“a response by an individual that delivers something unpleasant to another person”*.

Thus, aggression encompasses a range of behaviours in our social interactions that intends to harm others, either directly or indirectly. Aggressive behaviour often involves some physical act of violence intended to cause physical injury to the target person, e. g. hitting someone either by any weapon or even by using any part of our body. Verbal aggression involves behaviours by which we intend to emotionally hurt others by using hostile language. Many times we intimidate others by using non-verbal gestures that imply a threat of violence. Furthermore, indirect expression of displeasure or a subtle anger is also a form of passive aggression. Many times when we fail to express our aggression directly to our boss, we passively show our aggression by deliberately not completing the assigned job or by completing the task with very poor quality.

Often, an aggressive behaviour intends to hurt others, either physically or psychologically, and is motivated by the aggressor’s feelings of anger and hostility. Such aggression is called as hostile aggression. However, there are number of instances when aggression has some hidden goal and intends to harm others in order to fulfil that goal. Such aggressive behaviours are called as instrumental aggression. In the age of virtually linked world, another form of aggression has emerged significantly in the recent past where a person can harm others by uploading and spreading some embarrassing and defaming documents, photographs, comments, allegations, etc. on social networking platforms.

7.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO AGGRESSION

Being a significant obstruction for promotion of fraternity in the human being, aggression has been a very important area of study for the social psychologists. Researchers in this field have been largely focused on understanding its nature and causes, with an objective to reduce aggression in various social contexts. Explanations of aggression are represented by an array of theoretical perspectives originating from researches from various directions in the field of social psychology.

7.3.1 Biological Approaches

Traditionally, aggression has been believed to be originated from biological factors. While proposing psychoanalytic theory, Freud suggested that aggression in human beings primarily comes from an innate destructive instinct, *thanatos* or death instinct, that is initially directed against the self. He further argued that the aggressive behaviours represent redirection of this death instinct towards others in the society. Similarly, Lorenz (1966) proposed that human beings share an inherited fighting instinct with other species. Lorenz's ethological approach assumes that aggressive behaviours actually serve as a mean for males to obtain the mating partners to pass their genes to the next generation. In the process of evolution and in the quest of survival, aggression is further believed to be useful tool to secure food, territory, etc. that are thought to be valuable and essential for survival.

7.3.2 Drive Approaches

While rejecting biological explanation to the aggressive behaviours, many social psychologists proposed a psychological explanation which assumed that aggression is primarily originated from a strong drive to harm others. These theorists (Berkowitz, 1989; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowerer & Sears, 1939) argue that number of situational factors, such as frustration, provocation by others, presence of a priming cue (weapon), etc. may instigate this drive in the person which is expressed in the form of aggressive behaviours at the overt level. Thus, drive theories disregard the proposition that aggression is result of an innate instinct. Rather, they believe that aggressive behaviours are largely driven by external or situational factors.

7.3.3 Social Learning Approaches

Contrary to the innate instinct and drive perspectives, social learning approach proposes that aggressive behaviours are learned in the same way as we learn other social behaviours (Bandura, 1997). Aggressive behaviours are learned either by direct experience or by vicarious conditioning, observing aggressive social models. Learning of aggression by direct experience occurs when a person's aggressive behaviour is rewarded and reinforced in a given situation. On the other hand, aggressive behaviours can be learned by merely observing models attaining their goals by aggressive behaviours. Apart from such live modelling, we can learn aggressive behaviours by watching aggressive/violent movies and television programmes and by playing aggressive video games also. Social learning approach further suggests that even the aggressive behaviours are once learned, they are latently stored in the behaviour reservoir of the individual. Expression of these behaviours in any given situation is dependent on number of factors related to person's experiences in similar situations in the past; such as rewards or punishments received for aggressive behaviour in similar situations in past. Social learning also helps us in understanding the appropriate and socially approved ways and targets of aggressive behaviour in a situation.

7.3.4 Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

In one of very influential explanation of aggression, *frustration-aggression hypothesis* assumed frustration as the most important cause of aggression. In its strongest and primary form, the hypothesis proposed that “*the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression*” (Dollard et al., 1939). The hypothesis further defines frustration as an environmental event as “*an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response*”. Thus, the hypothesis proposes that frustration, as an event that obstructs the attainment of the goal by any obstacle to the goal directed behaviour, leads to aggression.

Although frustration-aggression hypothesis appears extremely appealing, large number of social psychologists expressed their disagreement with its both basic propositions that frustration always leads to aggression and aggression is always a consequence of a frustration. Reacting to such criticisms, the theorists reformulated the initial theory and Miller (1941) argued that aggression is not the only consequence of frustration; rather, one of numerous likely outcomes of frustration. Some studies have also claimed that frustration predicts aggression more strongly when it is perceived as illegitimate and unjustified (Dill & Anderson, 1995).

A significant reformulation of frustration-aggression hypothesis was proposed by Berkowitz (1989). He argued that owing to its aversive nature, frustration produces negative affect that generates ‘*aggressive inclination*’ that is proportionate to the negative affect produced by the frustration. This revision argues that the negative affect, and not the frustration is the immediate reason of aggressive behaviour. In the other words, frustration produces negative affect and the negative affect elicits aggressive inclinations. Berkowitz’s revision further argues that frustration is just one of several impending sources of negative affect and aggressive inclinations and there are additional sources of aggressive inclinations, such as insults, anxiety, environmental discomfort, etc.

Berkowitz also talked about aggressive inclinations and conceptualised them as constituted by affective and cognitive components. He argued that aggressive inclinations are neither overt aggression nor the negative affect produced by frustration automatically and essentially leads to aggressive behaviour. Rather, several factors prevent overt expression of aggressive behaviour, such as reappraisal of the situation, strong incentives for not behaving aggressively, highly aversive consequences of behaving aggressively, inaccessibility of the source of frustration, unavailability of opportunity to act aggressively, etc. Thus, Berkowitz reformulates frustration-aggression hypothesis as a mediation hypothesis claiming that number of factors mediate between negative affect produced by frustration and aggression and actually these mediating factors determine whether the person will engage in the overt aggressive behaviour or not. Nonetheless, Berkowitz’s modifications enhanced the acceptability of the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

7.3.5 Excitation Transfer Theory

Excitation transfer theory (Zillmann, 1994) suggests that emotional arousal persists over time and elevated excitement in one condition can transfer to subsequent condition; leading to enhanced likelihood of aggressive reaction in response to provocation, frustration or other factors present in the subsequent condition. For example, on the way to your office in the morning you find a very heavy traffic and narrowly escape a minor accident. Again, after reaching to the office you see that the lift is not functioning and you have to go up to the ninth floor by the stairs to reach to your cabin. To further worsen the situation, you see that your office attendant has littered the floor of your cabin by tea and finally, your aggression gets erupted and you burst on the office attendant.

Excitation transfer theory suggests that since arousal is carried forward to subsequent situations and therefore, the aggressive behaviour shown to the office attendant was certainly partly caused by the arousal that persisted from your earlier annoying experiences of heavy traffic and lift not being in order. This theory also argues that the dissipating effect of arousal is stronger in the situation when we are either not aware of any such residual arousal or attribute the residual arousal to the present situation, in case we are aware of it.

7.3.6 General Aggression Model (GAM)

Based on drawing inputs from a varied range of theoretical approaches of aggression and taking the role of social, cognitive, developmental and biological factors on aggression into account, *general aggression model (GAM)* presents a three-stage comprehensive and integrative framework for understanding human aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

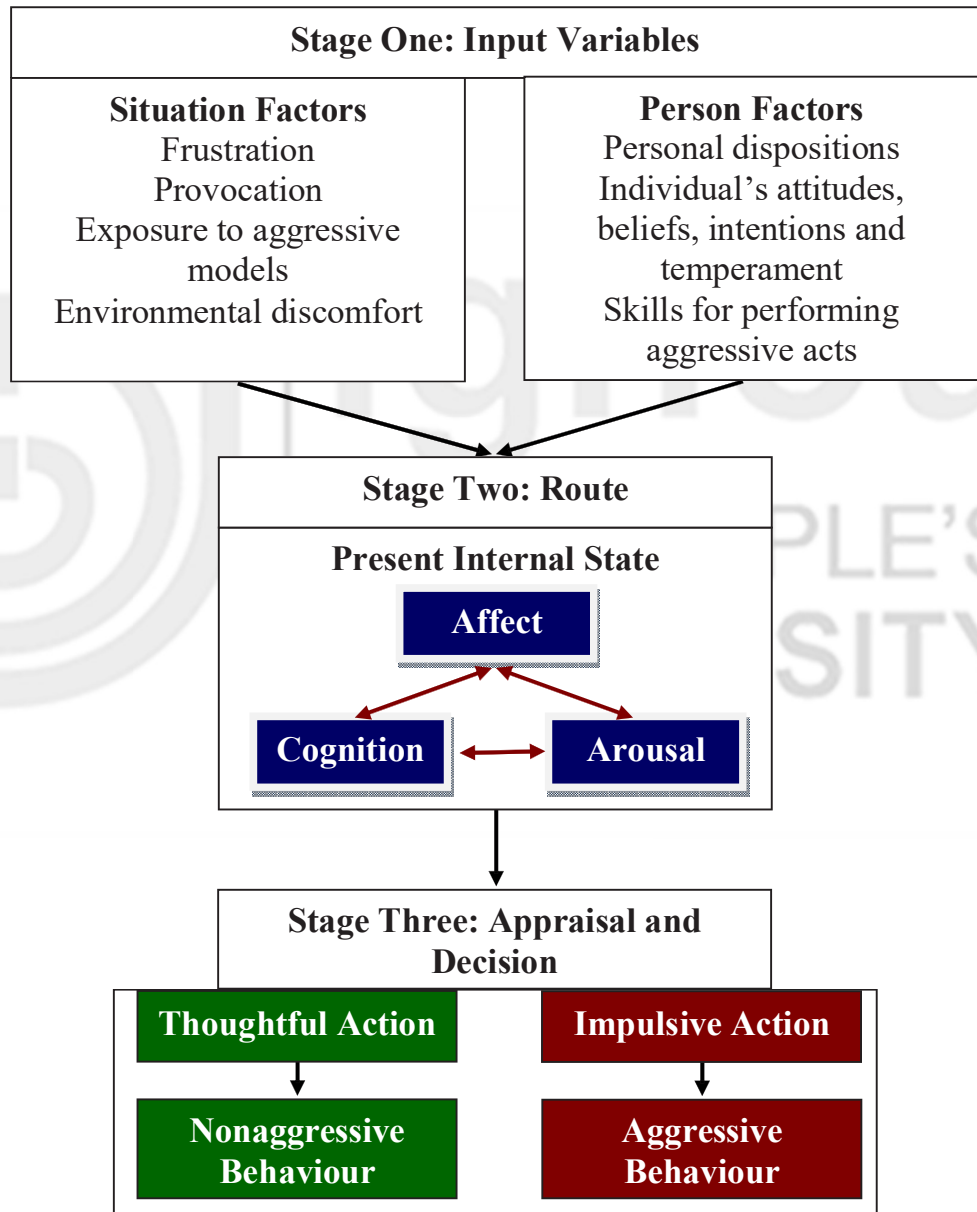


Fig. 7.1: General aggression model (Source: Bushman & Anderson, 2002)

At the first stage, the GAM assumes two types of input variables responsible for instigating expression of overt aggression. Factors coming under situational variables include frustration, provocation, exposure to *in vivo* or *in vitro* aggressive models, environmental elements causing discomfort to the person, etc. Variables pertaining to individual differences are related with the personal dispositions for aggressive behaviours, individual's attitudes, beliefs, intentions and temperament and skills for performing aggressive acts. GAM further assumes that personal and situational variables function in an additive or interactive way and therefore, aggression is directly linked with the number of personal and situational variables present in a given incidence.

The second stage pertains to the routes through which personal and situational factors affect the person's appraisal and decision processes leading to either aggressive or nonaggressive outcomes. GAM argues that the personal and situational factors influence the person's present internal state constituted by his or her affect (hostile feelings and hostile gestures and facial expressions), cognition (hostile thoughts, beliefs and attitudes) and arousal (physiological arousal and excitement) which further moderate the likelihood of aggression. Different input variables affect different present internal state variables, but present internal state variables also influence each other in interactive and reciprocal ways. Affect can influence cognition and arousal. For example, feeling angry can encourage hostile thoughts and increase arousal. Similarly, cognition and arousal can influence affect. For example, interpreting a situation in a hostile manner can increase anger, which in turn can increase arousal. GAM does not assume any specific sequence of the present internal state variables and suggest that any of the three variables can occur first and then influence the other two.

The third and final stage of GAM is the outcome stage where the person interprets the situation and based on his or her appraisal of the current situation and restraining factors, decision on being involved in aggressive or nonaggressive behaviour is taken. GAM argues that based on situational appraisal and reappraisal, the person engages either in thoughtful action; leading to nonaggressive behaviour, or in impulsive action; leading to aggressive behaviour.

GAM has further explained the process of social learning by which exposure to real or virtual aggressive models increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviours. Recurring exposure to these stimuli strengthens the aggression related knowledge structures; such as beliefs, attitudes, schemas and scripts relevant to aggression and with increasing strength of these knowledge structures, these are more activated by situational or person variables. Thus, repeated exposure to aggressive models actually "primes" the person for aggressive behaviour.

Self Assessment Questions 1

Fill in the following Blanks:

- 1) General aggression model (GAM) presents a three-stage comprehensive and integrative framework for understanding
- 2) Freud suggested that aggression in human beings primarily comes from an innate destructive instinct, the
- 3) Contrary to pro-social behaviour and interpersonal attraction; aggression, anger, violence and bullying behaviours represent a completely opposite axis of
- 4) Aggression is defined as

5) *Excitation transfer theory* (Zillmann, 1994) suggests that emotional arousal

.....
.....

7.4 CAUSES OF AGGRESSION

Despite having extremely negative impacts on social relations, aggression is quite common in human life. Similar to other social behaviours, aggression also involves a complex process before it is expressed in behaviours. Many times we behave aggressively in the situations in which we remain cool and calm at other occasions, and *vice-versa*. Arguably, there are number of factors that tend us to engage in aggressive behaviour.

7.4.1 Personal Factors

7.4.1.1 Frustration and Provocation

As discussed in the earlier section, frustration is believed to be one of the most common causes of aggression. Frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939) argued that we behave aggressively when any obstacle obstructs our goal directed behaviour and consequently we fail to obtain the goal. Some studies have reported that frustration is greater when goal directed behaviour is obstructed when we are closer to the goal. Arguably, greater frustration leads to more likelihood of being engaged in aggressive behaviour (Harris, 1974). Direct physical or verbal provocation is another very strong reason of aggression. In many social situations people intentionally and unfairly criticise us, pass sarcastic comments targeted to us, physically harm us or express any such intention. Such provocations lead us to engage in aggressive behaviour towards the source of provocation. Studies have been reported indicating that expression of arrogance, unjustified criticisms, public teasing, others' actions that damage or threaten to damage our public image or status, etc. are some strongest provocations that cause aggressive behaviours.

7.4.1.2 Personality and Aggression

There are number of similar situations to which different people respond differently. Social psychologists suggest that complex social behaviours like aggression and violence are often outcomes of an interaction between situational variables and traits or personal dispositions of individuals present in the situation. The TASS model (the traits as situational sensitivities model) argues that there are some traits that enhance the person's sensitivity arguably by reducing threshold for responding to the situation. For example, generally people behave aggressively only when they are faced with strong situational factors, such as strong provocation or frustration. The TASS model suggests that people with high trait aggressiveness respond aggressively even to very weak provocations. However, people with low trait aggressiveness require strong provocations for overt expression of aggression.

Similarly, persons with Type A behaviour pattern are extremely high on competitive drive and they are always hasty in their time management leading them to highly irritable and aggressive in social interactions. On the other hand, persons with Type B behaviour pattern are relatively relaxed and generally respond sensibly and in sober way even when they are faced with highly stressful situations.

Furthermore, low self-control has been reported as one of the strongest predictor of aggression. Social psychologists have argued that persons high in narcissism react with extremely high levels of aggression when other people behave against their wish, putting

their unrealistically inflated self-image in danger and consequently, their egos are threatened.

7.4.1.3 Bio-chemical Influences

Similar to other emotional reactions, aggression is also influenced by various chemicals. One of such chemicals is testosterone, the male hormones. In a meta-analysis, testosterone has been found to be positively correlated with aggression and aggressive tendencies (Book, Starzyk & Qunisey, 2001). Similarly, violent prisoners measured higher levels of testosterone as compared to non-violent prisoners in a comparative measurement (Dabbs, Carr, Frady & Riad, 1995). Another endogenous chemical important in aggressive behaviours is serotonin, a neurotransmitter which is found responsible for positive and pleasant emotions. Serotonin level has been also found to be negatively associated with aggression. In the other words, low level of serotonin has been reported in people who are highly aggressive.

Furthermore, several surveys have reported that alcohol consumption is also highly correlated with aggression and violent behaviours. Alcohol weakens the process that inhibits the learning of socialisation that we should not behave aggressively in social interactions. A cognitive explanation of positive correlation between alcohol and aggression presumes that alcohol impairs the information processing capacity of the individual required to inhibit response impulses, leading to reduced ability to anticipate negative consequences of aggressive responses and furthermore, person fails to take note of social values and norms that restrict a person to behave aggressively.

7.4.1.4 Displaced Aggression

Many times we are not able to express our aggression to the original provocation or target due to many possible reasons; such as unavailability of the source, abstract or intangible nature of the source, the source being stronger and fear of getting punished for aggressive and violent behaviour in the situation. In such conditions, our aggression is displaced and is expressed to a target that is either innocent or is mildly offensive and provocative and thus, functions as a trigger for our aggressive behaviour.

7.4.1.5 Age and Aggression

Despite of general belief that children do not involve in violent actions and aggressive behaviours as much as the adults do, the relationship between age and aggression is not that much simple. Arguably, due to lack of social skills younger children and adolescents largely depend on physical aggression to settle their disputes and to get their needs fulfilled. However, as the children grow up, the socialisation process teaches them other mature ways to resolve their issues and hence, they progressively learn to resist their aggression in variety of social interactions.

7.4.1.6 Gender and Aggression

Studies on rats have shown that male rats react to the stressful conditions either by fighting or by running away from the situation, commonly termed as *fight or flight response*. Contrariwise, female rats react to the similar situations by nurturing others and by getting engaged in social relations, termed as *tend and befriend response* (Taylor et al., 2000). Similar findings have been reported by various surveys conducted on human population (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996) showing that in almost all societies gender differences in aggression exist with males being physically and verbally more aggressive than the females. Presumably, across the societies females are intensely socialised to resort to more indirect forms of aggression and to be less expressive in direct physical and verbal aggression.

7.4.2 Interpersonal, Social and Cultural Factors

7.4.2.1 Exposure to Mass Media and Aggression

A content analysis conducted by the US National Television Violence Study has reported that almost 60% of TV programmes contain significant amount of violence. Studies conducted using various methods have consistently reported that children and adults exposed to violent content in the mass media, such as TV programmes, films, video games, etc., tend to more engage in violent and aggressive behaviours. In one of such studies by Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963), children were exposed to one of the two types of virtual models through TV shows. One group of children was exposed to an aggressive model; whereas, the other group of children was exposed to a non-aggressive model. Later on, children of both groups were given opportunity to play with toys similar one shown in the TV show. The researchers reported that the children who were exposed to the aggressive models expressed similar behaviours and played in aggressive and violent ways with the toys. Similar results have been reported in the studies that have used violent news, violent lyrics in music and violent video games as materials to foster modelling (Anderson, 2004).

The GAM, discussed in an earlier section, provides an explanation for the effect of exposure to media violence on aggressive behaviour (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). The GAM argues that consistent and prolonged exposure to media violence modifies our cognitive schemas, beliefs, attitudes and scripts and strengthens the knowledge structures related to aggression. As these knowledge structures become stronger, they lead people to a *hostile expectation bias*, a belief that other people generally behave in aggressive way. This belief further leads us to easily become aggressive and violent, even in response to general environmental conditions.

7.4.2.2 Social Rejection

Social rejection is one of the strongest instigators of human aggression. Human beings enjoy social relations and when we are excluded from the society, it negatively impacts our self-image and self-esteem and further leads us to become hostile and aggressive in social interactions. Studies have been reported showing that when we are rejected by others, it stimulates a hostile cognitive mind-set or bias which inclines us to perceive others' ambiguous and largely neutral behaviours as hostile. In such situations this bias leads us to respond in aggressive way (De Wall et al., 2009). From evolutionary perspective, we require to associate with others in society in order to fulfil our basic biological and social needs, and to survive. However, when we are socially rejected, fulfilment of this need is thwarted and our survival is jeopardised; leading to stimulation of instinct and responding in aggressive way.

7.4.2.3 Influence and Need Fulfilment

Another approach that tries to understand human aggression proposes that aggression is a way to exert influence on others' behaviour in social interactions and using this influence as a mean to get their needs fulfilled. However, aggression is used as a mean of social influence in specific situations; such as when we believe that being aggressive will obtain success and the target is unlikely to retaliate.

7.4.3 Situational and Environmental Factors

7.4.3.1 Weapon Effect

As demonstrated by many studies, angry persons are more prone to express their aggression when they are exposed to a weapon in the situation. In one of such studies,

Berkowitz and Le Page (1967) showed that the participants who had seen gun were more aggressive and delivered higher level of electric shock to the research accomplices than those who saw sports items.

7.4.3.2 Environmental Discomfort

Many surveys and correlational studies have reported a positive correlation between temperature and aggression and violence. Longitudinal studies have indicated that violent crimes are reported more in the hotter years and months than the cooler ones (Anderson et al., 1997). Studies comparing violence rates of various geographical regions have also found higher violent crime rates in the hotter areas, as compared to relatively cooler areas. Many other environmental discomforts, such as noise, smoke, air pollution, etc. have also been found to be associated with higher levels of aggression and violence.

7.5 REDUCING AGGRESSION

As a complex social behaviour, aggression is an outcome of interaction between personal, interpersonal, social and cultural factors and is expressed in overt behaviour when it is triggered by some situational and environmental variables. Thus, a number of strategies are proposed by social psychologists in order to reduce or control aggressive behaviour.

7.5.1 Social Learning: Punishment and Modelling

The behavioural and social learning approaches of psychology assume that undesirable aggressive behaviour is learned with the same process as adaptive social behaviours are learned. The most traditional and common approach to deter aggressive behaviour is using punishment. Punishment works on the principles of operant conditioning which assumes that the strength of association between the stimulus and the response will be weakened if an aversive consequence or outcome is made contingent upon the response. Therefore, the likelihood of aggressive behaviour is decreased when the consequence of an aggressive behaviour is made painful or aversive. However, punishment is a risky strategy and some care is required to be taken before using it. For example, punishment should be given immediately after the aggressive behaviour, each and every aggressive behaviour should follow punishment in order to avoid confusing conditioning, punishment should be strong and it should also be justified with sufficient explanation and reasoning.

Observational learning theories of social learning approach assume that as aggressive behaviours are learned by observing aggressive social models, these behaviours can be prevented and controlled by exposing the people to non-aggressive models or to the models who are involved in pro-social behaviours. Bushman and Anderson (2002) argued that exposure to violent media cognitively primes us to respond in aggressive way. Therefore, probability of developing such cognitive biases is significantly reduced if we are exposed to non-aggressive models, leading to decreased sensitivity to the environmental triggers of aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, exposure to the models involved in pro-social behaviours strengthens adaptive social behaviours.

7.5.2 Catharsis

Catharsis, a concept originated from psychoanalytic approach, is the process in which a strong emotion is vented out at some displaced target in milder form. Catharsis of aggression is expression of one's aggressive intent at a target that is in some way associated with the original source of aggression in some relatively non-harmful manner. There is an assumption that catharsis reduces the possibility of overt aggressive behaviour in its harmful form. Studies have shown that non-harmful behaviours, such as going for vigorous sports, aggressing at the photograph of an enemy or shouting in foul language in an

empty room, that are a substitute to the actual aggressive behaviour, have proved to reduce anger and aggression. However, such effects have been found to be only temporary and when the person is placed in the actual social setting, the aggressive behaviour may recover again. Furthermore, contrary to the belief that safer aggressive acts such as watching televised violence, attacking an inanimate object or verbal aggression may reduce the chances of aggressive behaviour, studies have shown that aggression may actually increase due to involvement in minor aggressive behaviours by reducing the inhibition for such behaviours.

7.5.3 Cognitive Strategies

General aggression model proposes that aggression is a behavioural outcome of various personal and situational factors that operate through three different routes: affect, cognition and arousal and also that there is significant interaction between these three components of internal state of the person. Cognitive strategies to reduce aggression function on the argument that intervention at the level of processing of aggressive thoughts can be helpful in breaking of cycle that promotes aggressive tendencies and behaviours. Apology is one of the most common and simple strategy to reduce aggression. When an aggressive behaviour is followed by an apology, the aggressive behaviour is attributed as an unintentional act. However, effectiveness of apology in reducing the likelihood of aggression depends on its genuineness.

Aggression has been believed as an adaptive behaviour in primitive societies. However, cooperation and collaboration are more required in today's developed and civilised societies that require restraining aggressive behaviours. Therefore, self-regulation and self-control of one's own behaviour is a requisite for maintenance of social order and growth and development of all people in the society. However, processes like self-regulation and self-control require significant amount of cognitive resources that are less available in a state of anger and aggression. Concept of cognitive deficit assumes that a person's cognitive resources available to process information regarding the consequences of aggressive behaviour are reduced when he or she is extremely angry. In order to avoid such situation while visiting a potentially irritating setting, pre-attribution of others' aggressive behaviour as his or her unique way of communication, rather than malicious intentions, may significantly reduce the probability of aggression. Similar to the effect of the pre-attribution to unintentional causes, preventing oneself from ruminating or thinking repeatedly about previous or imagined irritating behaviour of others may help avoid cognitive deficit. For example, reading articles of one's interest or watching pleasant or comedy films may check ruminations and help the person to regain control over cognitive processes.

7.6 BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Think about some specific, but very common behaviours; such as using very foul language about someone either in person or in their absence, teasing someone, making rude gestures, spreading rumours about someone, hurting someone physically, excluding someone from a group, etc. All these are examples of bullying, a behaviour that is quite similar to aggression. Olweus (1999) has defined bullying as "*a form of behaviour in which one person repeatedly assaults one or more others who have little or no power to retaliate*". Bullying behaviour can be expressed in several forms, such as verbal, physical, psychological or social. Although usually bullying is thought as a direct and interpersonal behaviour, in the age of virtually connected world it can happen online also. Moreover, it can be targeted either at one person or at a group of people. Primarily, bullying behaviour is believed more common among children and teenagers in the school

contexts. However, it is also found in other contexts, such as home environment, offices, prisons, informal social groups, etc.

7.6.1 Motives Behind Bullying Behaviour

Despite incessant efforts of the authorities to control or reduce bullying behaviours in the most vulnerable environments like schools and prisons, this behaviour is still very common and people often complain about such victimisation. Roland (2002) has attempted to explain the causes behind bullying behaviour. Primarily, he suggested that there are two key motives behind bullying behaviour: desire to exercise power over others and desire to be part of a powerful (bully) group. He argued that both of these motives lead a person to perceived enhanced social status. The research findings further suggested that girls had an additional motive that led them to engage in bullying behaviour. He found that the girls with higher tendency to be unhappy or depressed were more inclined to engage in bullying behaviour. The researchers argued that being engaged in bullying behaviour enhances the perceived social status and makes the bullies feel better and happier; leading to reduced tendency to feel unhappy or depressed.

7.6.2 Steps to Reduce Bullying Behaviour

Bullying may affect the victims in many ways. Any such constant victimisation brings about some relatively permanent changes in the victim's personality, such as low self-esteem, social phobia, generalised anxiety or even depression. In many extreme cases, where the victim is not able to find any way to get rid of this embarrassing situation, he or she even commits suicide. Looking at such distressing effects of bullying behaviour on the victims, many steps have been suggested to reduce it. Firstly, we should accept that bullying is a very common phenomenon with very uncommon and devastating effects. It must be treated as a serious problem and the authorities involved in the specific settings, such as teachers, parents, students, prisoners, wardens, guards, colleagues, supervisors, etc. should not only pay adequate attention to it, but also unanimously and decisively take action against it. Since bullying is recurring in nature, the potential victims should be educated for it. They should be regularly made aware about the institutional measures that counter bullying behaviours and provide protection to the victims. Furthermore, appropriate and prompt punitive actions against bullying behaviours can help in controlling such behaviours to a great extent.

Self Assessment Questions 2

State whether the following are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) When an aggressive behaviour is followed by an apology, the aggressive behaviour is attributed as an unintentional act. ()
- 2) General aggression model proposes that aggression is a behavioural outcome of various personal and situational factors that operate through three different routes: affect, cognition and arousal. ()
- 3) Catharsis is the process in which a strong emotion is vented out at some displaced target in milder form. ()
- 4) Type B behaviour pattern are extremely high on competitive drive and they are highly irritable and aggressive in social interactions. ()
- 5) Aggression cannot be used as a mean of social influence at specific situations. ()

7.7 LET US SUM UP

Aggression represents a range of interpersonal behaviours in our social interactions that intends to produce harm on others; directly or indirectly, physically or verbally, or by defaming the target person in the virtual world. Several of theoretical approaches have attempted to explain the processes involved in aggression and hostility. Biological theories conceptualise that aggression is an outcome of an innate instinct that human being shares with other species. Drive theories assume a strong drive to harm others as the source of aggression. Social learning approaches, based on various learning theories, propose that aggressive behaviours are learned either by direct experience or by vicarious conditioning, observing aggressive social models. One of the most promising explanations of aggression has been proposed by frustration-aggression hypothesis which assumes frustration as the most important cause of aggression. Excitation transfer theory has taken the importance of affective processes and arousal in aggression into account and has suggested that emotional arousal persists over time and elevated excitement in one condition can transfer to subsequent condition; leading to enhanced likelihood of aggressive reaction in response to provocation, frustration or other factors present in the subsequent condition. However, the most comprehensive explanation of aggressive behaviour has been presented by the general aggression model. GAM has proposed a three-stage framework for understanding human aggression and appropriately considers the roles of social, cognitive, developmental and biological factors in human aggression. Social psychologists have delineated several factors that tend a person in aggressive behaviours in various situations. These factors have been largely categorised as personal, interpersonal, social, cultural, situational and environmental factors. The strategies suggested by social psychologists to reduce or control aggressive behaviour largely focus on various psychological principles, such as punishment, modelling, catharsis and cognitive strategies. Bullying, a behaviour that is quite similar to aggression, is defined as a form of behaviour in which one person repeatedly assaults one or more others who have little or no power to retaliate. Two key motives behind bullying behaviour are: desire to exercise power over others and desire to be part of a powerful (bully) group. Furthermore, girls with higher tendency to be unhappy or depressed have been found to be more inclined to engage in bullying behaviour. Many steps to reduce bullying behaviour largely focus on environmental sensitisation and victim education and awareness.

7.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define aggression and explain its various forms. Also describe biological and drive theories of aggression.
- 2) Present an account of social learning approach and excitation transfer theory of aggression.
- 3) Explain frustration-aggression hypothesis. Also discuss the reformulations in the hypothesis proposed by Berkowitz.
- 4) Critically evaluate the general aggression model.
- 5) Describe various factors affecting human aggression.
- 6) Discuss various strategies used to reduce aggression.
- 7) Define bullying behaviour. Discuss the motives behind bullying behaviour and also explain the steps to reduce it.

7.9 GLOSSARY

Aggression	: Behaviour aimed at producing physical or psychological harm to another person.
Instrumental aggression	: Aggressive behaviour with some hidden goal and intention to harm others in order to fulfil that goal.
Verbal aggression	: Aggressive behaviours intended to emotionally hurt others by using hostile language.
Thanatos or death instinct	: An innate destructive instinct that is initially directed against the self.
Vicarious conditioning	: Conditioning of responses merely by observing models' behaviours.
Frustration-aggression hypothesis	: An assumption that frustration leads to aggression and aggression is a consequence of frustration.
Frustration	: An event that obstructs the attainment of the goal by any obstacle to the goal directed behaviour.
Excitation transfer theory	: An assumption that emotional arousal in one situation persists over time and is transferred to the subsequent situation leading to increased probability of aggression in the subsequent situation.
General aggression model	: A three stage three-stage framework for understanding human aggression by considering the roles of social, cognitive, developmental and biological factors in human aggression.
The TASS model	: An argument that some traits enhance the person's sensitivity by reducing threshold for responding to the situation.
Displaced aggression	: Displaced expression of aggression from the original target to an innocent or mildly offensive target.
Fight or flight response	: Tendency to react to the stressful conditions either by fighting or by running away from the situation.
Tend and befriend response	: Tendency to react to the stressful situations by nurturing others and by getting engaged in social relations.
Hostile cognitive bias	: A tendency that inclines us to perceive others' ambiguous and largely neutral behaviours as hostile.
Catharsis	: A psychoanalytic concept that believes that the consequences of a strong emotion can be subdued if it is vented out at some displaced target in milder form.

- Cognitive deficit** : Reduced availability of cognitive resources to process information regarding the consequences of aggressive behaviour in an extremely anger state.
- Bullying behaviour** : Repeated assaults by one person to one or more others who have little or no power to retaliate.

7.10 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) human aggression
- 2) thanatos or death instinct
- 3) social behaviours
- 4) a behaviour that is aimed at producing physical or psychological harm to another person.
- 5) persists over time and elevated excitement in one condition can transfer to subsequent condition.

Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) True
- 2) True
- 3) True
- 4) False
- 5) False

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