



PSY 206

Social Psychology

Course Manual

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Abiodun Lawal

Social Psychology

PSY206



University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre
Ibadan Open and Distance Learning Course Series Development
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Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfillment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



Prof. Isaac Adewole

Vice-Chancellor

Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

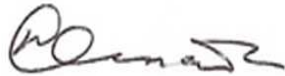
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre’s provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Okunade', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Bayo Okunade

Director

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About this course manual

Social Psychology PSY206 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. It is structured in the same way, as other psychology course.

How this course manual is structured

The course overview

The course overview gives you a general introduction to the course. Information contained in the course overview will help you determine:

- If the course is suitable for you.
- What you will already need to know.
- What you can expect from the course.
- How much time you will need to invest to complete the course.

The overview also provides guidance on:

- Study skills.
- Where to get help.
- Course assessments and assignments.
- Activity icons.
- Study sessions.

We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

The course content

The course is broken down into study sessions. Each study session comprises:

- An introduction to the study session content.
- Learning outcomes.
- Content of study sessions.
- A study session summary.
- Assessments and/or assignment, as applicable.



Your comments

After completing this course, Social Psychology, we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assessments.
- Course assignments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc).
- Your general experience with the course provision as a distance learning student.

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.

Course overview

Welcome to Social Psychology PSY206

Ever wonder why people do what they do? This course offers some answers based on the latest research from social psychology.

This course manual supplements and complements PSY206 UI Mobile Class Activities as an online course. The UI Mobile Class is a virtual platform that facilitates classroom interaction at a distance where you can discuss / interact with your tutor and peers while you are at home or office from your internet-enabled computer. You will also use this platform to submit your assignments, receive tutor feedback and course news with updates.

Social Psychology PSY206—is this course for you?

PSY206 aims to introduce you to the world of social psychology. You will be able to answer questions regarding how research is conducted in social psychology, how and why we think about ourselves and other groups of people as we do, how our behaviour changes when we are with others, how we are persuaded by, and attracted to others, how we conform, and what causes some people to react aggressively or be prejudiced.

Course outcomes



Outcomes

Upon a successful completion of Social Psychology PSY206, you will be able to:

- *present* theoretical underpinnings behind human behaviour in social situations.
- *undertake* research in social psychology.

Timeframe



How long?

This is a one semester course.

45 hours of formal study time is required.

Study skills



As an adult learner your approach to learning will be different to that from your school days: you will choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities.

Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, etc. Perhaps you will also need to acquaint yourself in areas such as essay planning, coping with exams and using the web as a learning resource. Your most significant considerations will be *time* and *space* i.e. the time you dedicate to your learning and the environment in which you engage in that learning.

We recommend that you take time now—before starting your self-study—to familiarize yourself with these issues. There are a number of excellent web links & resources on the Course Site. Go to “Self-Study Skills” menu on the course site.

Need help?



Help

As earlier noted, this course manual complements and supplements PSY206at UI Mobile Class as an online course.

You may contact any of the following units for information, learning resources and library services.

Distance Learning Centre (DLC)

University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Tel: (+234) 08077593551 – 55
(Student Support Officers)
Email: ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng

Head Office

Morohundiya Complex, Ibadan-
Ilorin Expressway, Idi-Ose,
Ibadan.

Information Centre

20 Awolowo Road, Bodija,
Ibadan.

Lagos Office

Speedwriting House, No. 16
Ajanaku Street, Off Salvation
Bus Stop, Awuse Estate, Opebi,
Ikeja, Lagos.

For technical issues (computer problems, web access, and etcetera), please send mail to webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng.

Academic Support



Help

A course facilitator is commissioned for this course. You have also been assigned an academic advisor to provide learning support. The contacts of your course facilitator and academic advisor for this course are available at onlineacademicsupport@dlc.ui.edu.ng

Activities



Activities

This manual features “Activities,” which may present material that is NOT extensively covered in the Study Sessions. When completing these activities, you will demonstrate your understanding of basic material (by answering questions) before you learn more advanced concepts. You will be provided with answers to every activity question. Therefore, your emphasis when working the activities should be on understanding your answers. It is more important that you understand why every answer is correct.

Assessments

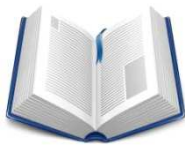


Assessments

There are three basic forms of assessment in this course: in-text questions (ITQs) and self assessment questions (SAQs), and tutor marked assessment (TMAs). This manual is essentially filled with ITQs and SAQs. Feedbacks to the ITQs are placed immediately after the questions, while the feedbacks to SAQs are at the back of manual. You will receive your TMAs as part of online class activities at the UI Mobile Class. Feedbacks to TMAs will be provided by your tutor in not more than 2 weeks expected duration.

Schedule dates for submitting assignments and engaging in course / class activities is available on the course website. Kindly visit your course website often for updates.

Bibliography



Readings





For those interested in learning more on this subject, we provide you with a list of additional resources at the end of this course manual; these may be books, articles or websites.

Getting around this course manual

Margin icons

While working through this course manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to “signpost” a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this course manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the icons and their meaning before starting your study.

			
Activity	Assessment	Assignment	Case study
			
Discussion	Group Activity	Help	Outcomes
			
Note	Reflection	Reading	Study skills
			
Summary	Terminology	Time	Tip

Study Session 1

Introduction to Social Psychology

Introduction

This Study Session will introduce to you the various ways of defining an area of psychology that is called social psychology.



Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- i. *present* the focus of social psychologist.

1.1 Definition of Social Psychology

Social Psychology The branch of psychology that deals with social interactions. It uses scientific methods "to understand and explain how the thought, feeling and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings"

Fundamental attribution error reflects failing to adequately consider the role of some situational factors that may affect a person's behaviour.

Construal the way in which people perceive, comprehend, and interpret the world around them.

Schemas a cognitive framework that helps you to organize and interpret information in your environment.

Social psychology is defined as the scientific study of the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of individuals in social situations. Social psychology emphasizes the influence of situations on behaviour. People often find it difficult to see the role that powerful situations play in producing their own and others' behaviour, and they are inclined to overemphasize the importance of personal dispositions in producing behaviour. The two tendencies together are called the **fundamental attribution error**. Social psychology also focuses on the role of **construal** in understanding situations. People often feel that their comprehension of situations is direct, without much mediating thought. In fact, even the perception of the simplest objects rests on substantial inference and the existence of complex cognitive structures for carrying it out. The primary tool people use for understanding social situations, and physical stimuli for that matter, is the **schema**. Schemas are the stored representations of numberless repetitions of highly similar stimuli and situations. They tell us how to interpret situations and how to behave in them.

Social psychology is interested in the power of culture/structure, interactions, and social groups; who we are, what we do, and what we believe. Social psychology is interested in the interplay between individuals, groups, and social structures. This class will be focused on explaining not just what goes on within individuals, a primary focus of psychology, but how individuals affect groups and structures, how groups and structures affect individuals as well. Ability to relate well with and in our environment – is what social psychologists want to express in detailed and painstaking manner. That is why in the historical background of social psychology, Gordon Allport (1965) referred to social psychologist as someone who scientifically attempts to understand,

explain and predict how the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals are influenced by the perceived, imagined or implied thoughts feelings and actions of others.

By this definition, *scientific* refers to the empirical method of investigation. The terms *thoughts*, *feelings*, and *behaviours* include all of the psychological variables that are measurable in a human being. The statement that others may be *imagined* or *implied* suggests that we are prone to social influence even when no other people are present, such as when watching television, or following internalized cultural norms. Social psychologists typically explain human behaviour as a result of the interaction of mental states and immediate social situations. In Kurt Lewin's conceptual formula, behaviour can be viewed as a function of the person in the environment, $B = f(P, E)$ (Lewin, 1951). In general, social psychologists have a preference for laboratory-based empirical findings. Social psychology theories tend to be specific and focused, rather than global and general.



Tip

Fundamental attribution error occurs when we overestimate how much another person's behaviour can be explained by dispositional factors. It reflects failing to adequately consider the role of some situational factors that may affect a person's behaviour.

Social psychology is an interdisciplinary domain that bridges the gap between psychology and sociology. During the years immediately following World War II, there was frequent collaboration between psychologists and sociologists (Sewell, 1989). However, the two disciplines have become increasingly specialized and isolated from each other in recent years, with sociologists focusing on "macro variables" (e.g., social structure) to a much greater extent. Nevertheless, sociological approaches to social psychology remain an important counterpart to psychological research in this area. In addition to the split between psychology and sociology, there has been a somewhat less pronounced difference in emphasis between American social psychologists and European social psychologists. As a broad generalization, American researchers traditionally have focused more on the individual, whereas Europeans have paid more attention to group level phenomena (Moscovici & Markova, 2006).



Tip

In *The Social Animal*, Elliot Aronson defines social psychology as "the influences that people have upon the beliefs or behaviour of others." He is especially interested in "the relevance that sociopsychological research might have for some of the problems besetting contemporary society." *Social psychology is therefore interested in the interplay between individuals, groups, and social structures.*

Study Session Summary



Summary

This Study Session has been able to introduce you to the various ways of defining an area of psychology called social psychology. The Study Session emphasizes that social psychology is a scientific study of the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of individuals in social situations. It also covers some of the areas of interest of social psychologists which include the interplay between individuals, groups, and social structures.

Bibliography

- <http://psychology.about.com/od/psychologycareerprofiles/a/social-psychologists.htm>
- <http://www.csua.berkeley.edu/~kaserina/psych/definition.html>

Study Session 2

Group Behaviour

Introduction



Learning Outcomes

In this Study Session, you will examine the term *group* and some of the behaviours that come from being a member of a group in our social life.

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- i. *define and use correctly* all of the keywords printed in **bold**.
 - **groups**
 - **norms**
 - **roles**
 - **relations**
- ii. *highlight* the importance of group behaviour.

2.1 Groups

Group two or more individuals that are connected to each another by social relationships

Human beings, like all large primates are group-living animals who influence and must get along with others. You are expected to exhibit a group behaviour being a member of a particular group in our society. **Group** members tend to interact, influence each other, and share a common identity. They have a number of emergent qualities that distinguish them from aggregates:

1. **Norms** – are implicit rules and expectations for group members to follow, e.g. saying thank you, shaking hands.
2. **Roles** – are implicit rules and expectations for specific members within the group, e.g. the oldest sibling, who may have additional responsibilities in the family.
3. **Relations** – patterns of liking within the group, and also differences in prestige or status, e.g., leaders, popular people.

Temporary groups and aggregates share few or none of these features, and do not qualify as true social groups. People waiting in line to get on a bus, for example, do not constitute a group.

2.2 Importance of Groups

Groups are important not only because they offer social support, resources, and a feeling of belonging, but because they supplement an individual's self-concept. To a large extent, people define themselves by their group memberships. Groups also affect performance and productivity. The followings are some of the concepts in group behaviour.

2.2.1 Social Facilitation

The presence of other people sometimes facilitates human performance and sometimes hinders it, but in predictable ways. Research in the area of **social facilitation** has shown that the presence of others is arousing, and that arousal increases people's tendencies to do what they are already predisposed to do. On easy tasks, people are predisposed to respond correctly, and so increasing this tendency facilitates performance. In contrast, on novel or difficult tasks, people are not predisposed to respond correctly, and so arousal hinders performance by making it more likely that they will respond incorrectly. A number of clever experiments have indicated that *it is the mere presence of others that leads to social facilitation effects*, although other factors, including **evaluation apprehension**, can intensify them. Moreover, **distraction-conflict** theory explains social facilitation by noting that awareness of another person can distract an individual and create a conflict between attending to the other person and to the task at hand, a conflict that is itself arousing.

2.2.2 Social Loafing

This is the tendency to exert less effort on a group task when individual contributions cannot be monitored. In other words, social loafing is the tendency of individuals to slack when working in a group. Social loafing is common when the task is considered unimportant and individual contributions are not easy to see.

2.2.3 Deindividuation

Deindividuation Immersion in a group to the point that one loses sense of individuality and feels lessened responsibility for one's actions.

This is a tendency for large groups of people to sometimes transform into unruly mobs. This may happen because the anonymity and diffusion of responsibility that are often felt in large groups can lead to a mental state of **deindividuation** in which one is less concerned with the future, with normal societal constraints on behaviour, and with the consequences of one's actions. The deindividuated state of "getting lost in the crowd" stands in marked contrast to how people normally feel, which is quite individually identifiable. Self-awareness theory maintains that focusing attention on the self will lead to **individuation** and, in turn, careful deliberation and concern with how well one's actions conform to internal moral standards. Most people overestimate how much they personally stand out and are identifiable to others, a phenomenon known as the **spotlight effect**.

Individuation Process by which the wholeness of the individual is established

Spotlight effect Tendency to think that other people are watching us more closely than they actually are.

2.2.4 Groupthink

Self-censorship The withholding of one's true opinion from an audience perceived to disagree with that opinion

This is the tendency for members of cohesive groups to deal with the stress of making highly consequential decisions by pursuing consensus more vigorously than a critical analysis of all available information. Groupthink has been implicated in the faulty decision making that has led to a number of policy fiascos. Group decision making is affected by how cohesive a group is, how directive its leader is, and in-group pressures that can lead to **self-censorship** or the tendency for people to refrain from expressing their true feelings or reservations in the face of apparent consensus on the part of the other group members. Exchanging views

Risky shift The observed tendency for people to make more daring decisions when

they are in groups, than when they are alone.

with fellow group members can lead to more extreme decisions and make people more extreme in their attitudes. When groups make riskier decisions than individuals, the **risky shift** has occurred.

Group polarization A phenomenon in which people's decisions and opinions become more extreme in group settings

Persuasive argument group polarization in which the opinions of group members conversing about a problem or choice will likely be more extreme when most of the members desire a basic position, because the group will produce more disputes favouring the majority position.

Social comparison People evaluate and learn their own abilities and attitude relative to other peoples.

2.2.5 Group Polarization

Group discussion tends to create **group polarization**, whereby initial leanings in a risky direction tend to be made more risky by discussion and initial leanings in a conservative direction tend to be made more conservative. Group polarization is produced through **persuasive arguments**, in that a larger pool of information and arguments are made available to all group members. It is also produced through **social comparison**. People from cultures that place a high value on risk are more likely to make risky decisions after group discussion than people from cultures that do not value risk as highly. Polarization is a particularly common outcome in homogeneous groups, something we noted may be a particular problem in the modern world, as people are likely to read newspapers and watch news programs that fit their pre-existing views. This polarization may be further reinforced through communication on the Internet, which makes it increasingly easy for people to exchange information solely with those who share their opinions

Study Session Summary



Summary

This Study Session introduces students to the concept referred to as group. Areas such as qualities that distinguish real groups from aggregates and some concepts of group behaviours were not left out in the Study Session. Major qualities distinguishing real group from aggregates include norms, roles and relations. Some concepts of group behaviour discussed in the Study Session include social facilitation, deindividuation, social loafing, groupthink, group polarization.

Bibliography

Forsyth, D. R. (2006). *Group dynamics*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Study Session 3

Attraction

Introduction

The Study Session discusses forces that make people to liking one another; which explains interpersonal relationships. In the process of studying this session, you will see how people establish relationships, dating and even end up fall in love and in some cases get married.



Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- i. *point out* the forces that lead individuals to liking others.
- ii. *highlights* some of the claims of evolutionary psychologists on attractiveness.

3.1 Interpersonal Attraction

Attraction The natural feeling of being drawn to other individuals and desiring their company

A major area in the study of people's relations to each other is interpersonal **attraction**. This refers to all of the forces that lead people to like each other, establish relationships, and in some cases, fall in love. Several general principles have been discovered by researchers in this area.

3.1.1 Determinants of Attraction

Propinquity

A major determinant of who we end up being attracted to is **propinquity**, or sheer closeness of contact with potential targets of attraction. To a remarkable extent, the people one knows, and likes, and even loves, are those with whom one comes in contact most frequently in neighbourhoods, on the job, and in recreational settings. Proximity increases attraction, as opposed to long distance relationships which are more at risk. Three reasons for the power of propinquity are:

- a) **sheer availability**: one has to come into contact with others to have a chance to know and like them,
- b) **anticipation of interaction**: people tend to put their best foot forward for those they know they will see again, and
- c) **mere exposure effect**: simply encountering a person or object, even under negative circumstances, makes us like the target more.

Similarity

A second major source of attraction is **similarity**. Engaged couples are more similar to one another than are randomly paired men and women. The more similar two people are in attitudes, background, and other traits, the more probable it is that they will like each other. Contrary to

popular opinion, opposites do not usually attract. Studies using the *bogus stranger* paradigm invariably find that people like individuals who resemble them more than individuals who do not. There is scant evidence that "opposites attract." There are four reasons for the effect of similarity on attraction. They are:

- a) *similar others validate our beliefs and values,*
- b) *similarity facilitates smooth interactions,*
- c) *we expect similar others to like us* (which is rewarding), and
- d) *similar others have qualities we like.*

Physical Attraction

This is another major source of attraction. Physically attractive people are much more popular with the opposite sex. Attractive people are given higher grades for their work. People who are physically attractive earn more money in the workplace, and they even receive lower sentences for crimes. In short, they benefit from a halo effect, in that they are believed to have many positive qualities that go beyond their physical appearance. Attractiveness has an impact even in infancy and childhood: attractive infants receive more attention from their mothers, and attractive children are believed to be more intelligent by their teachers. People think a transgression by a child is less serious if the child is attractive. Moreover, even three month- olds will look longer at an attractive face than at an unattractive one. **Gender** is an important variable when it comes to attractiveness, with physical appearance affecting the lives of women more than men. Women deemed unattractive at work suffer worse outcomes than men who are considered unattractive. Physical attractiveness has such impact because:

- (a) it has immediacy—you see it before any other virtues or faults,
- (b) the attractiveness of one's friends and partner affects one's prestige, and
- (c) biology plays a role—that is, we are wired to appreciate some kinds of physical appearance more than others.

3.2 Evolutionary Psychologists and Attractiveness

Evolutionary psychologists argue that our biology prompts an attraction to features that signify **reproductive fitness**—that is, the capacity to perpetuate our genes in future generations if we were to mate and have children with a person who possesses those features. These include physical characteristics that signal vitality, fertility, and likely reproductive success. Evolutionary psychologists also claim that there are biologically based differences between men and women in the importance placed on attractiveness and in the determinants of attractiveness.

In species in which parental investment is greater for the female, the males must compete vigorously among themselves (**intrasex competition**) for access to choosy females. The males also must compete for the females' attention (**intersex attraction**) and are typically the louder and gaudier of the species. In the human species, say the evolutionary psychologists, differential parental investment on the part of

men and women leads women to prefer fewer sexual partners than men. It leads men to prefer women whose physical appearance gives the impression that they will be fertile—for example, features such as smooth skin and a waist that is narrow in relation to hips. Women are attracted to men who can be expected to provide for them and for their children—men who are strong, industrious, and have social status.

Though much evidence from the animal kingdom and from the study of humans supports the hypotheses of the evolutionists, most of the human findings can be explained without resort to an evolutionary explanation. The strongest support for the evolutionary approach to attractiveness in humans comes from studies showing that women increase their preference for attractive (or at least symmetrical) and masculine men during the ovulatory phase of their menstrual cycles, when they have a relatively higher probability of conceiving.

The notion of **reward** can explain most of the reasons we like people—we tend to like those who provide us with the greatest rewards (broadly construed). Another way to understand attraction is in terms of **social exchange**. This theory holds that people pursue those interactions that provide the most favourable difference between rewards and costs. According to social exchange theory, relationships are based on rational choice and cost-benefit analysis. If one partner's costs begin to outweigh his or her benefits, that person may leave the relationship, especially if there are good alternatives available.

Hint

With time, long term relationships tend to become communal rather than simply based on exchange.

Study Session Summary



Summary

The Study Session discusses attraction as a concept in social psychology. It was noted that people establish relationships, date one another and even end up fall in love and in some cases get married. The Study Session covers some of the determinants or sources of attraction and some arguments of evolutionary psychologists on attractiveness.

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Study Session 4

Interpersonal Relationships

Introduction

In this Study Session, interpersonal relationship is seen as an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring. This association may be based on inference, love solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment. The Study Session also discusses some major model of interpersonal relationship.



Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- i. *outline* the process of interpersonal relationship.
- ii. *analyse* the major models of relationship.

4.1 Need for Interpersonal Relationships

There is a biologically based *need to belong*, evident in the evolutionary benefits and universality of different relationships and in the negative consequences that accompany the absence of relationships, as shown by the deficits in feral children. Relationships shape the sense of self and how social events are remembered and explained. People all have certain *relational selves*, or beliefs, feelings, and expectations that derive from their relationships with particular other people. When one of these is activated by a particular person, the person is seen in the light of the relevant relational self. Relationships affect personal well-being on a moment-to-moment basis. Interpersonal relationships are dynamic systems that change continuously during their existence. Like living organisms, relationships have a beginning, a lifespan, and an end. They tend to grow and improve gradually, as people get to know each other and become closer emotionally, or they gradually deteriorate as people drift apart, move on with their lives and form new relationships with others.

4.2 Models of Relationship

4.2.1 Levinger'S model of Relationship

One of the most influential models of relationship development was proposed by psychologist George Levinger (1983). This model was formulated to describe heterosexual, adult romantic relationships, but it has been applied to other kinds of interpersonal relations as well. According to the model, the natural development of a relationship follows five stages:

1. **Acquaintance** – Becoming acquainted depends on previous relationships, physical proximity, first impressions, and a variety of other factors. If two people begin to like each other, continued interactions may lead to the next stage, but acquaintance can continue indefinitely.
2. **Buildup** – During this stage, people begin to trust and care about each other. The need for intimacy, compatibility and such filtering agents as common background and goals will influence whether or not interaction continues.
3. **Continuation** – This stage follows a mutual commitment to a long-term friendship, romantic relationship, or marriage. It is generally a long, relative stable period. Nevertheless, continued growth and development will occur during this time. Mutual trust is important for sustaining the relationship.
4. **Deterioration**– Not all relationships deteriorate, but those that do tend to show signs of trouble. Boredom, resentment, and dissatisfaction may occur, and individuals may communicate less and avoid self-disclosure. Loss of trust and betrayals may take place as the downward spiral continues, eventually ending the relationship. (Alternately, the participants may find some way to resolve the problems and re-establish trust.)
5. **Termination**– The final stage marks the end of the relationship, either by death in the case of a healthy relationship, or by separation.

4.2.2 Bowlby Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's *attachment theory* holds that, early in development, children rely on their parents for a sense of security. Some children are luckier in these formative relationships than others. People having a *secure attachment style* are comfortable with intimacy and wish to be close to other people when they are stressed. People having an *avoidant attachment styles* feel insecure in relationships and distance themselves from others. People who have an *anxious attachment style* are also insecure in relationships but respond to this insecurity by compulsively seeking closeness and by obsessing about the quality of their relations with others. Researchers have discovered that attachment styles are quite stable over the lifespan. Secure, anxious, and avoidant individuals live quite different lives, enjoying different levels of relationship satisfaction (securely attached individuals are the most satisfied and the least likely to break up) and suffering different kinds of difficulties (anxiously attached individuals are particularly prone to psychological problems).

4.2.3 Fiske's Relationship Styles

Fiske's relational models theory posits that there are four different kinds of relational styles:

- a) **communal sharing** family-like, relationship style, in which members of the group receive what they need and give what they can;
- b) **authority ranking** relationship style characteristic of corporations and tribal groups headed by chiefs, in which power flows from a head to those lower and resources are distributed as the head sees fit;

- c) **equality matching** relationship style governed by the principles of reciprocity and sameness, which is typified by friendships; and
- d) **market pricing** relationship style governed by the principle of benefits in proportion to inputs and characteristic of companies that reward individuals in proportion to their contributions. All of these relationship styles are practiced by all societies (with the exception of market pricing for some), but different cultures apply different styles in different domains.

Communal relationships Relationships in which people's primary concern is being responsive to the other person's needs.

Exchange relationships Relationships in which members benefit each other to incur or repay obligation

Clark and Mills have contrasted **communal relationships** over the long term with **exchange relationships** of short duration that are governed by concerns of equity. Power is based on *status*, *authority*, and *dominance relations*. According to the approach/inhibition theory of power, elevated power makes people look at things in more simplistic fashion, and act in the social world in more disinhibited ways. The most mysterious and compelling relationship is the romantic bond. Romantic relationships are an important part of our social life, and they are important to our satisfaction with our lives and even our physical health. Divorce and marital dissatisfaction are often caused by *marrying young*, *criticism*, *defensiveness*, *stonewalling*, and *contempt*. Happy romantic relations are affected by *commitment*, which is a function of rewards in the relationship, *alternatives* to the relationship, and *investments* in the relationship. Happy couples have more *positive illusions* about their partners, and they are likely to pursue novel but arousing activities together.

Study Session Summary

The Study Session discusses interpersonal relationship as an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring. It was emphasized this association may be based on inference, love solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment. Some models of interpersonal relationships were also mentioned and discussed.

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Study Session 5

The Social Self

Introduction

The Study Session discusses self in the context of self-esteem and self-concept. It is our self-perception that shapes the way we react within our self-esteem; self-esteem being the amount of relative value we attach to ourselves. Also, it is what, who, where and how we think we are in any given situation.



Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- i. *describe* the concept of self and its social perception.
- ii. *point out* the foundation to self-concept.
- iii. *highlight* the forms and respective functions of self-knowledge.

5.1 The Concept of Self

Self A person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, esp. considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action.

Self-esteem A person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value.

The **self** is not a new term *per se*; it is a word we are all familiar with. Each of us has a sense of awareness, of being separate from both our physical and social environments. Each of us has a concept of “Me”, “I”, “We”, “They” and “Us” with which we make references. It is our self-perception that shapes the way we react within our **self-esteem**; self-esteem being the amount of relative value we attach to ourselves. It is what, who, where and how we think we are in any given situation. For example, I may see myself as a traditional chief and as such comport myself as a traditional chief by exercising a lot of restraint in the face of great provocation in a communal land dispute, a situation which another person might have created too aggressively. Because of the higher value the community and myself place on what I am (a chief), I try as much as possible to maintain that “esteem” placed on me by myself and the community through my position. Again where an action is required of me, I may see such as a test of competence in my ability and depending on my self-esteem, I may or may not oblige such a request. Self-esteem is learned from others and becomes a reflection of how others regard us or, more accurately, the value we think others attach to us as persons (Balogun, 1988).

5.2 Foundations to Sense of Self-Concept

Self-concept The image a person has of himself/herself, including physical appearance and personality characteristics.

There are several different foundations of the sense of self or **self-concept**. The self originates in part from biologically based dispositions inherited from parents, as well as from family birth order. Firstborns tend to be more assertive and achievement-oriented; later borns tend to be more open to experience and cooperative. The self is shaped by the social

Distinctive hypothesis highlights aspects of the self that makes us feel most unique in a given context.

context, with people using *social comparison* to learn about their own abilities, attitudes, and personal traits. According to the **distinctiveness hypothesis**, people in Western cultures tend to define themselves according to what is unique about themselves compared to others in the social context. The self is profoundly shaped by whether people live in independent or interdependent cultures. Gender also affects how people define themselves, with women generally emphasizing their relationships and defining themselves in an interdependent way, and men generally emphasizing their uniqueness and construing themselves in an independent way.

5.3 Forms and Functions of Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge Our knowledge about ourselves in the form of beliefs, images, memories, schemas, stories, and expectations.

There are several forms and functions of **self-knowledge**. Self-knowledge can take the form of *beliefs, images, memories, and stories* we tell about our lives. This self-knowledge helps guide construal of social information, through memories and self-schemas, typically reinforcing pre-existing beliefs about the self. Self-knowledge embodies cultural and moral standards, and it motivates appropriate behaviour.

Self-discrepancy theory A general theory relating different patterns of self-beliefs to different kinds of emotional-motivational predispositions

Self-discrepancy theory investigates how people compare their actual selves to their ideal and ought selves. Self-knowledge varies across cultures. In independent cultures, people use their self-knowledge as standards in judging others. They tend to have unrealistically positive beliefs about themselves, an illusion of control, and unrealistic optimism, which all enhance their sense of well-being. In interdependent cultures, other people rather than the self serve as standards for social judgment, and there is less evidence of self-illusions.

There are two kinds of self-esteem: **trait self-esteem**, which tends to be a stable part of identity, and **state self-esteem**, which changes according to different contextual factors, such as personal failure or the loss of a beloved sports team. The motivation to have elevated self-esteem guides the formation of friendships that allow one to engage in favourable social comparisons and esteem-enhancing pride taken in the friend's successes. Self-esteem is more important and elevated in Western than in East Asian cultures. There are perils of high self-esteem, and studies have linked various forms of antisocial behaviour with narcissistic levels of self-esteem.

The social self is concerned with how we live and interact with others in our social environment. It is our conception of social self that determines who to live with, where to live, who to associate with and so on. It shows our concern about how we want others to view us and how we see or want to see others. The reaction of others is more significant in the formation of social self. In the micro sense, the image that your belonging to say a social club (e.g. Rotary Club, Red Cross) dictates is what you tend to live with. So also at the cultural level such as your socio-economic status, cultural or ethnic group, educational attainment group (e.g. graduate) all determine your social self-conceptualization. In fact, social self is a consequence of expectation from others. For example, if people think of you as a millionaire you tend to behave like one. If people see you as a role model, you tend to live up to their

expectations. Social self is made up of labels assigned by others and self-imposed.

Self-presentation theory considers the self to be a dramatic performer in the public realm. People seek to create and maintain a favorable public impression of themselves. *Face* refers to what people want others to think they are. Researchers now distinguish between *private* and *public self-consciousness*. They have shown that people engage in *self-monitoring* to ensure that their behaviour fits the demands of the social context. People protect their public self through *self-handicapping behaviours*, which are self-defeating behaviours that can explain away possible failure. Face concerns and self-presentation shape social communication. *On-record communication* is direct; *off-record communication* like joking and teasing is indirect and subtle.

Study Session Summary



Summary

Self as a term has been explained in the context of self-esteem and self-concept in the Study Session. Individual's self-perception shapes the way he/she reacts within his/her self-esteem; self-esteem being the amount of relative value we attach to ourselves. Some of the concepts identified with the self were discussed.

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Study Session 6

Social Influence

Introduction

In this Study Session, social influence is defined as the way people affect the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of others. Like the study of attitudes, social influence is a traditional, core topic in social psychology. Social influence is also closely related to the study of group dynamics, as most of the principles of influence are strongest when they take place in social groups.



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *discuss* the importance of social influence in human interaction.
- ii. *highlight* the types of social influence

6.1 The Meaning of Social Influence

Social influence is change in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviours that results from interaction with another individual or a group. Social influence, however, is the process by which individuals make real changes to their feelings and behaviours as a result of interaction with others who are perceived to be similar, desirable, or expert. People adjust their beliefs with respect to others to whom they feel similar in accordance with psychological principles such as balance. Individuals are also influenced by the majority: when a large portion of an individual's referent social group holds a particular attitude, it is likely that the individual will adopt it as well. Additionally, individuals may change an opinion under the influence of another who is perceived to be an expert in the matter at hand.

6.2 Types of Social Influence

There are three types of social influence. They include conformity, compliance and obedience.

6.2.1 Conformity

This involves a change in a person's attitudes or behaviour in response to (often implicit) pressure from others. Conformity is the most common and pervasive form of social influence. In other words, conformity can be defined as the tendency to act or think like other members of a group. Group size, unanimity, cohesion, status, and prior commitment all help to determine the level of conformity in an individual. Although conformity is usually viewed as a negative tendency in some culture, it is however

true also, that an amount of conformity is not only necessary and normal, but probably essential for a community to function. There are two major motives in conformity or major sources of conformity. These are:

- a. **Normative Influence**, the tendency to conform in order to gain social acceptance, and avoid social rejection or conflict, such as it is with peer pressure. That is, out of concern for the social consequences of their actions.
- b. **Informational Influence**, which is based on the desire to obtain useful information through conformity, and thereby achieve a correct or appropriate result. That is, people look upon the actions of others as information about what is best to do.

Several characteristics of the group affect conformity pressure. The larger the *group size*, the greater its influence—but only up to a size of about four people. *Unanimous groups* are far more effective than those with even a single other dissenter. Moreover, the greater the *expertise* and *status* of group members, the greater their influence. Culture and gender affect conformity. People from more interdependent cultures are more likely to conform than people from independent cultures. Women are somewhat more likely to conform than men. But both men and women conform more in domains in which they are less knowledgeable. Several task factors affect conformity pressure. The more *difficult* and *ambiguous* the task is, as with the autokinetic experiment, the greater the conformity. When people's responses are *anonymous*, they are less affected by others' responses. Finally, when people have *satisfying explanations* of others' judgments, such as monetary gain, they are less affected by others' responses.

6.2.2 Compliance

This involves going along with explicit requests made by others. In other words, it refers to any change in behaviour that is due to a request or suggestion from another person. **The Foot-in-the-door** technique is a compliance method in which the persuader requests a small favour and then follows up with a larger favour, e.g. asking for the time, and then asking for ten naira. A related trick is the Bait and switch (Cialdini, 2000). Compliance with the requests of others may be elicited through both *reason-based techniques* and *emotion-based techniques*. Powerful reason-based approaches include invoking the *norm of reciprocity* by, say, doing a favour for someone or making a concession (the *door-in-the-face technique*), and starting up a *foot-in-the-door process* by first getting someone to agree to a small request before making the more substantial request in which one is really interested. Powerful emotion-based approaches include getting the targeted person in a good mood, which is likely to increase compliance because of *mood maintenance*. Compliance may also result from a desire for *negative state relief*, as an act of compliance may reduce guilt or sadness.

6.2.3 Obedience

This involves giving in to the commands of an authority. In other words, obedience as a form of social influence is a change in behaviour that is the result of a direct order or command from another person. The direction of influence is not always from the majority to the minority.

Sometimes *minority influence* can be substantial, especially when it is a consistent minority. The study of obedience has been dominated by the experiments of Stanley Milgram, who documented that most participants go along with potentially harmful commands of an authority. Participants in obedience experiments are caught in a conflict between two opposing forces: *normative social influence* and *moral imperatives*. To modify the strength of these forces, participants tend to tune out the learner and to tune in the experimenter. Although Milgram's results strike nearly everyone as wildly counterintuitive, they can be rendered less surprising by considering the *stepwise nature* of his commands, the *attempts to terminate* the experiment made by most participants, and the ability of participants to place the onus of *responsibility* on the experimenter, not themselves. Sometimes attempts to influence us backfire, as when would-be influencers generate *reactance*. Our attempts to resist influence are aided by simple practice at it, by having an ally, by being wary of slippery slopes, and by avoiding action in the face of an emotional influence attempt by "sleeping on" the request.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that social influence is the way people affect the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of others. The three major type of social influence are conformity, compliance and obedience. Some of the techniques of compliance include the door-in-the-face technique and the foot-in-the-door technique.

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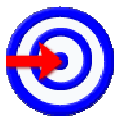
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Study Session 7

Attitudes and Persuasion

Introduction

In this Study Session, you will explore the concepts of attitude and persuasion as related to the field of social psychology. You will also examine various ways of making attributions to causes of some behaviour.



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *highlight* the component definition of attitudes and functions of attitudes.
- ii. *point* out the variables involved in the process of persuasion.
- iii. *present* how attitudes predict behaviour.

7.1 Attitudes

Though there are many possible methods by which attitudes can be defined. Attitudes are defined as dispositions to evaluate objects in a negative or positive light. Attitudes include three different elements: *affective evaluations* (emotions), *cognitions* (thoughts and knowledge), and *actions* (behaviours). Also, there are many possible methods by which attitude definitions may be classified, one of the most useful is based on consideration of the type and number of components (response tendencies) contained in the definition.

A. Single component definition: Several writers (e.g. Benn, 1970) restrict the concept of attitude to a single response tendency towards an object which is always in the evaluative form of positive or negative terms. Collins (1970) defines attitude as “a feeling that an object is good or bad, fair or unfair” while Bem (1970) states that “attitudes are likes and dislikes.” They are one’s affinities for and one’s aversions to situations, objects, persons, groups, etc. As we shall come to realize later on, most measurement scales adopted the single component definitions of attitude because it is less cumbersome in operationalizing and measuring than other forms.

B. Two-component definition: Other definitions of attitude have included cognitive aspect of attitude as the basic foundations in their approach. It is the belief of this school of thought that cognitive component consists of beliefs and thoughts that will facilitate or interfere with evaluation on the attitude object positively or negatively.

C. Three-component definition: Other scholars believe that when an expression is held towards the attitude object, then people are influenced either to move towards or away from the attitude object. In other words, there are behavioural dispositions towards the attitude object. Wagner

(1969) states that “an attitude is composed of affective, cognitive and behavioural components that correspond, respectively to one’s evaluations of, knowledge of, and predisposition to act toward the object of the attitude.” Zimbardo and Ebbesen (1970) explain these components as “the affective component consisting of a person’s evaluation of liking of, or emotional response to some object or person; the cognitive component consisting of beliefs about or factual knowledge of the object person; and the behavioural component involves the person’s overt behaviour directed toward the object or person.

From the foregoing, one can say that depending on the perspective of the researcher, attitude can be defined in its measurable terms, i.e. the one that suits the purpose of the researcher. One thing we cannot run away from is the fact that affective component runs through all the definitions and that this is so because an attitude becomes an attitude only when it is expressed verbally by the individual, and the socially recognizable expression is always in negative or positive terms. Attitudes can be measured with self-report *Likert scales*, with response latencies that capture *attitude accessibility* (the degree to which the attitude is ready to become active in an individual's mind), and with attitude linkage measures that gauge *attitude centrality* (the extent to which an attitude is correlated to attitudes about other issues).

7.1.2 Functions of Attitudes

Attitudes serve several functions which include:

1. **Utilitarian Function:** Attitudes serve a utilitarian function, signaling rewards and punishments.
2. **Ego-defensive Function:** Attitudes serve an ego-defensive function, protecting people from undesirable beliefs about themselves—for example, the recognition that their lives will inevitably end.
3. **Value-expressive Function:** Attitudes serve a value-expressive function, reflecting values that people want others, especially their reference groups, to acknowledge.
4. **Knowledge Function:** Attitudes serve a knowledge function, organizing how people construe the social world and guiding how people attend to, store, and retrieve information.

7.2 Persuasion

Persuasion is an active method of influence that attempts to guide people toward the adoption of an *attitudes*, *idea*, or behaviour by rational or emotive means. Persuasion relies on appeals rather than strong pressure or coercion.

7.2.1 Variables in Persuasion Process

Numerous variables have been found to influence the persuasion process, and these are normally presented in four major categories: **Who** said **what** to **whom** and **how**.

1. The **Communicator**, including credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

2. The **Message**, including varying degrees of reason, emotion (such as fear), one-sided or two-sided arguments, and other types of informational content.
3. The **Audience**, including a variety of demographics, personality traits, and preferences
4. The **Channel**, including the printed word, radio, television, the internet, or face-to-face interactions.

A non-credible source is unlikely to induce immediate attitude change, but with time, the **sleeper effect** may occur. This is when attitude change occurs after time has passed and the message has become dissociated from its source. Vivid communications, including images of **identifiable victims**, are usually more effective than more pallid ones, and fear-evoking communications that provide fear-reducing courses of action produce more attitude change than either non-fear-evoking communications or fear-evoking communications that do not provide fear-reducing courses of action. Message content often varies in independent and interdependent societies, with ads in independent cultures emphasizing the individual and ads in interdependent societies emphasizing the collective. The target, or audience, of a message also affects whether a particular message is effective and whether attitude change occurs. Audience, or **receiver characteristics**, include the need for cognition (that is, how deeply people like to think about issues), mood, and age. According to the **third-person effect**, most people believe that other people are more likely to be influenced by the media than they are. But in fact the media have surprisingly weak effects on most people. This is true in the case of consumer advertising (which rarely leads to long-lived effects), political advertising (which has small effects on most voters and mainly affects late-deciding voters), and public service announcements (which are unlikely to have a lasting impact on behaviour unless they are also accompanied by specific suggestions and practice in avoiding negative behaviours). The media are most effective in **agenda control**—that is, in shaping what people think about. They do so through the number of stories and discussions they present on various issues, like terrorism, moral values, war, the environment, or the economy, and which therefore are likely to be present in people's minds.

7.2.2 Models of Persuasion

Both the **heuristic-systematic model** of persuasion and the **Elaboration Likelihood Model** of persuasion hypothesize that there are two routes to persuasion. Factors that determine which route is used include motivation, or how important the message is to the person, and ability to process the message. When using *the central (systematic) route* to persuasion, people attend carefully to the message, and they consider relevant evidence and underlying logic in detail. People are especially likely to go through this route when the message is relevant to them, when they have knowledge in the domain, and when the message evokes a sense of personal responsibility. When going through the central route, people are more persuaded by high-quality messages. In the *peripheral (heuristic) route to persuasion*, people attend to superficial aspects of the message. They use this route when they have little motivation or time or

ability to attend to its deeper meaning. In this route, people are persuaded by *source characteristics* (such as attractiveness and credibility of the communicator) and **message characteristics** (such as how many arguments there are and whether the conclusions are explicit).

People can be quite resistant to persuasion because of preexisting biases, commitments, and knowledge. People selectively attend to and evaluate information in accordance with their original attitudes, tuning in information that supports their preexisting attitudes and beliefs, and tuning out information that contradicts them. Public commitment to a position helps people to resist persuasion. Just thinking about an attitude object can produce **thought polarization**, or movement toward extreme views that can be hard for a communicator to alter. People with more knowledge are more resistant to persuasion because they are able to counter argue against messages that take an opposite position to what they know and believe. Resistance to persuasion can be encouraged through **attitude inoculation**, or exposing a person to weak arguments against a person's position and allowing the person to generate arguments against it.

7.3 Attitude and Behaviour

There are many theories that have been discussed extensively to explain the connectivity between attitude and behaviour; whether attitude predicts behaviour or behaviour has some effects on individual's attitudes. The section discusses theories explaining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. The theories discussed include theory of reasoned action/planned behaviour, cognitive consistency theory and self-perception theory.

7.3.1 The Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behaviour

The **theory of reasoned action** maintains that attitudes guide behaviour through a deliberation process that takes into account conscious attitudes toward an object and subjective norms. The **theory of planned behaviour** maintains that the influence of conscious attitudes and subjective norms on behaviour depends on people's beliefs that they can perform a given behaviour and the behaviour will have the desired effects. It can be surprisingly difficult at times to predict behaviour from attitudes because (a) attitudes are sometimes *ambiguous* or *inconsistent*, (b) attitudes sometimes *conflict* with other powerful determinants of behaviour, (c) attitudes are sometimes based on *secondhand information* about the object, (d) attitudes (for example, toward the environment) and the attitude targets we actually confront (for example, whether to donate to motherless home) may be at different *levels of generality* and may be "about" very different things, and (e) some of our behaviour is *automatic* and can bypass our conscious attitudes altogether.

7.3.2 Cognitive Consistency Theories

Behaviour can have very substantial effects on attitudes. Most of the research showing such effects grew out of *cognitive consistency theories*,

which stress how important consistency of attitudes and behaviour is to most people.

1. *Balance theory* was the earliest consistency theory. It specifies that people desire balance among their beliefs and sentiments, and thus prefer to hold attitudes that "follow from" other attitudes ("my enemy's enemy could be my friend" or "my friend's friend could be my enemy"), and prefer to behave in ways that align with their attitudes.
2. *Cognitive dissonance theory* is based on the idea that people experience *dissonance*, or discomfort, when attitudes and behaviour are inconsistent. People therefore most often try to reduce the dissonance they are feeling by bringing their attitudes in line with their behaviour. People engage in dissonance reduction when making decisions. After making a choice between two objects or courses of action they find "hidden attractions" in the chosen alternative and previously undetected flaws in the un-chosen alternative. This reduces the dissonance aroused by having to give up some desired object or action.

How to Reduce Dissonance

1. People also engage in *effort justification* when they exert effort toward some goal and the goal turns out to be disappointing. They justify their expenditure of energy by deciding that the goal is truly worthwhile.
2. People attempt to reduce dissonance in *induced compliance* situations—that is, in situations in which other people prompt them to do or say something that is contrary to their beliefs. For example, when induced by another person to argue for a position at variance with their true attitudes with the promise of some sort of compensation for doing so, people who are under compensated feel that they must justify their behaviour and typically do so by changing their attitudes to better align with their behaviour.

Dissonance resulting from inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour should be felt only when (a) there is *free choice* (or the illusion of it) to engage in the behaviour, (b) there is *insufficient justification* for the behaviour, (c) the behaviour has *negative consequences* either for the self or for another, and (d) the *consequences* of the behaviour were *foreseeable*. The effects of inconsistency can be reduced if the individual has just had some *self-affirming* experience that obviates the need to protect the ego from the unpleasant consequences of foreseeable action. Dissonance is apparently universal, but there are cultural differences in the conditions that prompt people to experience it. For example, the Japanese tend to experience post-decision dissonance only when asked to think about how another person would choose.

7.3.3 Self-perception theory

This theory originated as an alternative explanation for the results obtained in dissonance experiments. It is based on the premise that people do not move their attitudes into line with their behaviour because they are motivated to justify them; they do so merely because they observe their

behaviour and the circumstances in which it occurs and infer, just as an observer might, what their attitudes must be, given that they behaved as they did. Whereas self-perception may well play a role in generating the effects in many dissonance experiments, some evidence clearly indicates that there is often a motivational component as well. "Mere" self perception appears to account for attitude change in situations in which attitudes are weak or unclear to begin with, whereas more motivated, dissonance reduction processes are invoked when attitudes are more strongly held to begin with.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In the Study Session, it is noted that attitudes have been defined as dispositions to evaluate objects in a negative or positive light. Attitudes include three different elements: affective evaluations (emotions), cognitions (thoughts and knowledge), and actions (behaviours). Attitudes have functions; which include: utilitarian function, ego-defensive, value-expressive and knowledge function. Persuasion is an active method of influence that attempts to guide people toward the adoption of an attitudes, idea, or behaviour by rational or emotive means. Finally, models of persuasion were briefly discussed.

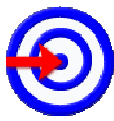
The Study Session also discussed theories explaining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Cognitive dissonance theory is based on the idea that people experience *dissonance*, or discomfort, when attitudes and behaviour are inconsistent. Self-perception theory argues that people do not move their attitudes into line with their behaviour because they are motivated to justify them; they do so merely because they observe their behaviour and the circumstances in which it occurs and infer, just as an observer might, what their attitudes must be, given that they behaved as they did. Finally, means of reducing dissonance were discussed with practicable examples.

Study Session 8

Causal Attribution

Introduction

People constantly search for the causes of events, and their attributions are important for their behaviour. Attribution is therefore the focus of this Study Session.



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *explain* attribution.

8.1 Attribution Styles

People have chronically different *explanatory styles*. Some people have a pessimistic style, attributing good outcomes to external, unstable, and local causes and bad outcomes to internal, stable, and global causes respectively. This style is associated with poor health, poor performance, and depression.

Some attributions are made after witnessing a single instance of behaviour, and to make an attribution based on a single observation we make use of the *discounting* and *augmentation principles*. If situational constraints could plausibly have caused an observed behaviour, we discount the role of the person's dispositions. If there were strong forces that would typically inhibit the behaviour, we augment its implications, and assume that the actor's dispositions were particularly powerful.

In the multiple-observation case, we have much more information about the person, the situation, and other people's behaviour. When we have made multiple observations of a behaviour, we can use the *covariation principle* to analyze that behaviour. When we know that a person engages in a given behaviour across many situations, and that other people tend not to engage in the behaviour, we tend to attribute the behaviour to the person. When we know that the person only engages in the behaviour in a particular situation, and that most people in that situation also engage in the behaviour, we tend to attribute the behaviour to the situation.

Counterfactual thoughts can powerfully affect attribution. We often perform mental simulations, adding or subtracting elements about the person or the situation and using these simulations to guide our attributed outcomes. Joy or pain in response to an event is amplified when it is easy to see how things might have turned out differently. Our attributions are not always fully rational. We sometimes attribute events to causes that

flatter us beyond what the evidence calls for—revealing *self-serving attributions*.

Fundamental attribution error (also known as the *correspondence bias*) is the tendency to attribute behaviour to real or imagined dispositions of the person and to neglect influential aspects of the situation confronting the person. Even when it ought to be obvious that the situation is a powerful influence on behaviour, we often attribute behaviour to presumed traits, abilities, and motivations. One of the reasons we make such erroneous attributions is due to the *just world hypothesis*. We like to think that people get what they deserve and that bad outcomes are produced by bad or incompetent people. Another reason for the fundamental attribution error is that people and their behaviour tend to be more salient than situations. A final reason for the fundamental attribution error is that attribution appears to be a two-step process. People are initially and automatically characterized in terms consistent with their behaviour, and this initial characterization is only later adjusted to take account of the impact of prevailing situational forces.

There are *actor-observer differences* in attributions. In general, actors tend to attribute their behaviour much more to situations than do observers. This is partly due to the fact that actors can usually see the situations they confront better than observers can. There are marked cultural differences in susceptibility to the fundamental attribution error. Interdependent peoples are less likely to make the error than independent peoples, in part because their tendency to pay attention to context encourages them to look to the situation confronting the actor. For bicultural people, it is possible to prime one culture or the other and get very different causal attributions. Much of the time we are concerned with more than whether to attribute behaviour to the situation versus the person, and are interested in discerning the intentions and reasons that underlie a person's behaviour.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In the Study Session, efforts were made to discuss various ways of making attributions to causes of some behaviour. Some of the errors we make in explaining behaviour include fundamental attribution error.

Study Session 9

Social Judgement

Introduction

Social judgment is how we perceive people, how we form impressions about them and how we think about social things. Social psychology is concerned with how we make these judgments, how accurate they are, and what the consequences of these judgments are. How we form first impressions and respond to people depends on how we judge them. Sometimes we judge people incorrectly. Misjudgments are the basis of prejudice and discrimination; which shall be discussed in the next Study Session.



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *illustrate* how social judgment is made.
- ii. *point* out the factors influencing our judgment.

9.1 How Judgement is Made

By focusing on errors in judgment and decision making, we can come to understand the way people make judgments and learn to avoid mistakes. Sometimes our judgments are biased because they are based on misleading information, which can occur even when the information is encountered firsthand. One bias that can taint information experienced firsthand is that of *pluralistic ignorance*, which tends to arise in situations in which people are reluctant to express their misgivings about a perceived group norm, with their reluctance reinforcing the false norm. Although people tend to believe that their memories are the product of automatic recording devices, in actuality they are reconstructions based on general knowledge, abstract theories, and fragments of truly remembered events. The reconstructive nature of memory occasionally gives rise to recollections of events that never occurred.

9.2 Factors Influencing Judgment

Flashbulb memories are powerful images of the moment when one learned of some dramatic news, but they too are subject to error, despite the sense of certainty and vividness attached to them. Information received second-hand can also be biased, as speakers often do not provide a full account of what happened or may be motivated (because of ideology or the desire to entertain) to stress certain elements at the expense of others. When people describe events, they tend to *sharpen* some elements – that is, emphasize points that are salient to them and that they think will interest us – and to *level* or deemphasize other elements.

There is evidence that people who watch local newscasts, with their steady drumbeat of dangerous events, exaggerate the dangers in their lives.

How information is presented can also affect judgment. For example, the order in which information is presented can be quite important. When the information presented first is more influential, we say there is a *primacy effect*, usually due to the fact that initial information can affect the way subsequent information is interpreted. When information presented last is more influential, we say there is a *recency effect*, usually due to the fact that such information is more likely to be available in memory. Order effects are a type of *framing effect*. Others include the "spinning" of information by varying the structure of the information that is presented to produce a desired effect in an audience. More subtle framing effects include whether information is presented as a potential gain versus a potential loss.

Knowledge structures, including *schemas*, influence our interpretation of information. Knowledge structures are the *top-down* tools we use to understand the world, as opposed to the *bottom-up* tools of perception and memory. Schemas influence what we attend to, they guide our inferences and construal of information, and they direct our memories to recover what seems relevant. The likelihood that a given schema will be applied to incoming information is a function of the degree to which information matches the critical features of the schema. Unfortunately, sometimes the information available increases the similarity to a schema but not the appropriateness of applying it.

Other things being equal, the more recently a schema has been "activated," the more likely it is to be applied to new information. It is not at all necessary that we be consciously aware of a schema in order to be influenced by it. We seem to have two different systems for processing information: an *intuitive*, automatic one and a *rational*, analytic one. Intuitive responses are based on rapid, associative processes, whereas rational processes are based on slower, rule-based reasoning. Intuitive *heuristics*, or mental shortcuts, are useful and seem to provide us with sound judgments most of the time, but it is possible to identify several heuristics that sometimes lead us into errors of judgment.

People use the *availability heuristic* when they judge the frequency or probability of some event by the readiness with which relevant instances come to mind. This can encourage us to overestimate how much we have contributed to group projects, and it can lead us to overestimate the risks posed by salient, memorable hazards like earthquakes and homicide and to underestimate the likelihood of silent killers like asthma and stroke. People use the *representativeness* heuristic when they try to categorize something by judging how similar it is to their conception of the typical member of the category, or when they try to make causal attributions by assessing how similar an effect is to a possible cause. The strategy is fine as far as it goes. The problem is that we often overlook highly relevant considerations such as *base-rate information*—how many members of the category there are in a population.

The "inside" perspective for making judgments causes us to make errors such the *planning fallacy*, which could be avoided if the individual took

an "outside" perspective, attending to the history of finishing related tasks in a given time. When availability and representativeness operate together they can produce potent *illusory correlations*, which result when people think that two variables are correlated, both because they resemble one another and because the co-occurrence of two similar events is more memorable than the co-occurrence of two dissimilar events.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In the Study Session, we defined social judgment as how we perceive people, how we form impressions about them and how we think about social things. The Study Session explains errors in social judgment and various factors that influence our judgment.

Study Session 10

Prejudice, Stereotypes and Discrimination

Introduction



Learning Outcomes

This Study Session defines prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. The Study Session affirms that we make a lot of generalizations based on limited experiences or contacts. Stereotypes reflect ideas that groups of people hold about others who are different from them. Prejudice involves a negative attitude and emotional response to members of a group. Discrimination involves negative behaviour toward an individual because of the person's membership in a group.

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *define* and *use* correctly all of the keywords printed in **bold**.
 - **prejudice**
 - **stereotypes**
 - **discrimination**
- ii. *highlight* the three different approaches to prejudice and discrimination.

10.1 Stereotype

Stereotypes are generalizations about groups that are often applied to individual group members. Stereotypes are as old as human culture itself. They reflect ideas that groups of people hold about others who are different from them. A stereotype can be embedded in single word or phrase (such as, "jock" or "nerd"), an image, or a combination of words and images. The image evoked is easily recognized and understood by others who share the same views. Stereotypes can be either positive ("black men are good at basketball") or negative ("women are bad drivers"). But most stereotypes tend to make us feel superior in some way to the person or group being stereotyped. Stereotypes ignore the uniqueness of individuals by painting all members of a group with the same brush. Stereotypes can appear in the media because of the biases of writers, directors, producers, reporters and editors. But stereotypes can also be useful to the media because they provide a quick identity for a person or group that is easily recognized by an audience. When deadlines loom, it's sometimes faster and easier to use a stereotype to characterize a person or situation, than it is to provide a more complex explanation

A stereotype is a popular belief about specific social groups or types of individuals. The concepts of "stereotype" and "prejudice" are often confused with many other different meanings. Stereotypes are standardized and simplified conceptions of groups based on some prior assumptions. Psychologists like other scientists have been looked upon to

solving social problems as well as contributing to the causes, understanding and solution of everyday problems we encounter. For example, psychologists have been asked to contribute to the structural methods that could be effective for teaching interpersonal interactions such as prejudice in human relationship.

10.2 Prejudice

This involves a negative attitude and emotional response to members of a group. A prejudice defined to be a prejudgment, an assumption made about someone or something before having adequate knowledge to be able to do so with guaranteed accuracy, or "judging a book by its cover". The word *prejudice* is most commonly used to refer to preconceived judgments toward people or a person because of *race, social class, ethnicity, age, disability, obesity, religion, sexual orientation*, or other personal characteristics. It also means beliefs without knowledge of the facts and may include "any unreasonable attitude that is unusually resistant to rational influence. Prejudice is a long standing phenomenon world over e.g. in Nigeria, men believe that there are certain things men only can do, especially in politics. Prejudice is the bias feelings an individual or group of individuals has against another. It often has negative tendencies attached to it. Prejudice has come to be part of our social life. So, no matter how much we disapprove of prejudice and the behaviours that stem from it, it must reflect some rather universal features of human thinking and feeling i.e. every society has prejudice.

10.3 Discrimination

This involves negative behaviour toward an individual because of the person's membership in a group. Blatant, explicit racism in much of the world is now relatively rare. But more subtle *modern racism* does exist, whereby people may hold overtly egalitarian attitudes and values while at the same time unconsciously having negative attitudes and exhibiting more subtle forms of prejudice toward members of certain groups. Benevolent racism and sexism consist of attitudes the individual thinks of as favourable toward a group but that have the effect of supporting traditional, subservient roles for members of oppressed groups.

In recent years, there have been successful efforts to measure people's true attitudes with measures that are not easy to fake. One of these is the *implicit association test*, which compares reaction times when grouping outgroup pictures (or words) and positive items together, with reaction times when grouping outgroup pictures (or words) and negative items together. Another implicit measure involves *priming* with a picture of a member of some group. If the prime increases the time it takes to recognize subsequently presented positive words, and decreases the time it takes to recognize subsequently presented negative words, this is an indication of prejudice toward the group.

10.4 Approaches to Prejudice and Discrimination

We will examine three different approaches to prejudice and discrimination: the economic perspective, the motivational perspective, and the cognitive perspective.

10.4.1 Economic Perspective

One version of the *economic perspective* on prejudice and discrimination is *realistic group conflict theory*, which reflects the fact that groups are sometimes in competition for scarce resources and that this can lead to prejudice and discrimination. The classic Robbers Cave experiment put two groups of boys in competition at a camp. Soon the boys were expressing open hostility toward one another. When the boys were brought together in noncompetitive situations where they had to cooperate to achieve *super-ordinate goals*—that is, goals that could only be achieved when the two groups worked together—the hostility dissipated.

10.4.2 Motivational Perspectives

The *motivational perspective* on prejudice and discrimination reflects the sad fact that sometimes poor relations between groups occur simply because there are two groups and a we/they opposition results. This occurs even in the *minimal group paradigm*, wherein people find out they are members of one of two groups that have been defined in a trivial and arbitrary way. They will favor members of their own group over members of the other group, even when it actually costs their group something to "beat" the opposition.

Social identity theory attempts to explain in-group favouritism, maintaining that self-esteem is derived from group membership and group success. *Frustration-aggression theory* accounts for some of the most dangerous behaviour toward outgroups. When people are frustrated in their attempt to reach some goal—for example, the goal of economic prosperity—they often lash out at less powerful individuals or groups. Challenges to a person's self-esteem can have similar effects, and experiments have shown that people express more antagonism toward outgroup members when they have suffered a blow to their self-esteem.

10.4.3 Cognitive Perspectives

The *cognitive perspective* on prejudice and discrimination focuses on stereotypes, which are a form of categorization. People rely on them all the time, but especially when they are tired or overloaded. Several construal processes lead to the construction of inaccurate stereotypes. Because we know our own groups best, we tend to assume that outgroups are more *homogeneous* than ours are. We also often engage in biased *information processing*, seeing those aspects of other groups that confirm our stereotypes and failing to see facts that are inconsistent with them. Moreover, we often unknowingly create *self-fulfilling prophecies*—applying stereotypes to members of outgroups and then behaving toward them in such a way as to bring out the very behaviours that fit our

stereotypes. Distinctive groups (because they are in the minority) tend to be associated with distinctive (because they are rare) behaviours. This sort of *paired distinctiveness* results in our attributing properties to groups that are illusory.

Encountering contradictory evidence about groups may not change our ideas about them because we treat the evidence as if it were merely an exception that proves the rule. We tend to code favourable evidence about in-group members at high levels of generality and the same sort of evidence about out-group members at low levels of generality. The converse is true for unfavourable evidence. Moreover, behaviour consistent with a stereotype is often attributed to the dispositions of the group members, whereas behaviour that is inconsistent with a stereotype is often attributed to the situation. We sometimes respond to out-group members reflexively, relying on *automatic processes* wherein prejudice is unleashed outside of our awareness. Sometimes these automatic negative reactions can be corrected by conscious, *controlled processes*. Members of stigmatized groups suffer not just from prejudice and discrimination but also from *attributional ambiguity*. They have to ask whether others' negative or positive behaviour toward them is due to prejudice or to some factor having nothing to do with their group membership. The performance of members of stigmatized groups can also be impaired by *stereotype threat*—that is, the fear that one will confirm the stereotypes that others have regarding some salient group of which one is a member.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we examined prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. The Study Session affirms that we make a lot of generalizations based on limited experiences or contacts. Stereotypes was said to reflect ideas that groups of people hold about others who are different from them. Prejudice was said to involve a negative attitude and emotional response to members of a group. Discrimination was said to involve negative behaviour toward an individual because of the person's membership in a group. All these were discussed with concrete examples.

Study Session 11

Aggression and Altruism

Introduction

Aggression involves the deliberate acts by individuals that are intended to harm other individuals or groups (Baron & Richardson, 1994). Although violence is a fact of life, people are also capable of helping each other, even complete strangers in emergencies. Research indicates that altruism occurs when a person feels empathy for another individual, even in the absence of other motives (Batson, 1998).



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *describe* aggression, and its various forms.
- ii. *explain* altruism and its various forms.

11.1 Aggression

Aggression Any behaviour that is intended to cause harm or pain and can either be physical or verbal'. An anonymous author has also defined

11.1.1 The Meaning of Aggression

Aggression is any form of behaviour by an individual or a group of individuals which is intended to cause pain, suffering, or damage to another person. To the religionist, aggression is regarded as a manifestation of behaviour by an individual or individuals who are under demonic influence. In other words, it appears various meanings are given to aggression by different people based on their experiences, beliefs, exposure as well as their field of study. However, a consensus has emerged among most social psychologists studying human aggression about what constitutes "aggression" in general and what constitutes the major forms or "ideal types" of aggression. Aggression involves the deliberate acts by individuals that are intended to harm other individuals or groups (Baron & Richardson, 1994).

Aggression includes many types of behaviours. Although most people usually only think of it in terms of physical attacks, verbal behaviour meant to cause psychological harm is also aggression. *Physical aggression* includes behaviours like hitting another person or firing a gun. *Verbal aggression* includes behaviours like screaming at someone in anger or using an obscene gesture. *Hostile aggression* is motivated by anger and hostility, with the primary aim of harming others, either physically or psychologically. *Instrumental aggression* is behaviour that is intended to achieve some goal that just happens to require aggression. Violent and aggressive acts are more likely to be committed by men than by women. Women are aggressive in different ways than men, using

relational violence such as gossip, alliance formation, and ostracism to hurt others emotionally.

Media violence has been shown to cause violence and aggression in real life. When a media-publicized suicide occurs, copycat suicides follow. Longitudinal studies show that children who watch lots of violence on TV commit more serious crimes as adults than children who watch less violence. Watching violence on TV also causes more violent behaviour in the short run. Violent video games also increase the likelihood of violence. *Heat* affects levels of violence. There are higher rates of violent crime in hotter cities and more violence during hot months than during cool months.

11.1.2 Types of Aggression

Despite the different types of aggression as listed above, there seems to be a consensus among scholars on three main types of aggression; which are:

Hostile Aggression

This refers to that aggression that is aimed at or intended to harm another person. It is a deliberate thing that is more often than not pre-planned. E.g. an individual deliberately hits another person with the fist with the intention of harming him.

Instrumental Aggression

This form of aggression is targeted at obtaining an object, privilege or space with no deliberate intent to harm another person (typical of toddlers).

Relational Aggression

It is a form of hostile aggression that does damage to another's peer relationships, such as in social exclusion or rumor spreading. E.g. "Go away, I will not play with you again" or when someone tells another person "Don't play with Aanu again; she has been naughty of late."

According to the *frustration-aggression hypothesis*, aggression results from thwarted needs, and thwarted needs result in aggression. Construal processes affect both anger and aggression. Acts that seem to be intentional are more likely to cause aggression than identical acts that do not seem intentional. People in many parts of the world, including many people in the U.S. South, adhere to a culture of honor, meaning that they are inclined to respond to insults and actions that convey malicious intentions with violence or threats of violence. Such cultures can be found wherever there is a history of herding, with its great attendant risks of loss of all wealth. Rape-prone cultures have high levels of violence in general and use rape as a weapon in battle. They also use rape as a ritual act and as a threat to keep women subservient to men. Relatively rape-free cultures tend to grant women equal status. Evolutionary theory provides a useful perspective on *family violence*. Stepchildren are more subject to abuse than genetic offspring who can carry on one's genetic line. Men, who have more to gain by eliminating romantic rivals, are vastly more likely to kill other

Hint

men than women are to kill other women.

11.2 Altruism

Situational determinants of altruism can be far stronger than our intuitions tell us they should be. Being late reduced the likelihood of a seminary student's helping a victim from 60 percent to 10 percent. Whether someone offers help to a victim or not (*bystander intervention*) also depends greatly on the number of people who observe some incident. The presence of others leads to a *diffusion of responsibility*, in which no one individual takes responsibility for helping the victim. *Pluralistic ignorance* occurs when people are uncertain about what is happening and do nothing, often out of fear of embarrassment in case nothing is really wrong. Their reaction reinforces everyone's erroneous conclusion that the events are innocuous.

Victim characteristics that increase the likelihood of being helped include whether the victim is similar to the target, whether the victim screams and makes known the situation, and whether the victim is female. Evolutionary approaches to altruism lead initially to a puzzle as to why it would exist at all. From the standpoint of evolution, all our actions should serve to increase the likelihood of survival and reproduction. The kin selection hypothesis explains, however, that people will help others to preserve the genes of close kin so as to benefit their own gene pool.

Another kind of helping behaviour, *reciprocal altruism*, also arises out of selfish motives. The reciprocity motive entails people grant others favor or help others in the belief that those whom they have helped will at some future time grant them favors of similar value. People may help others out of another selfish motive—to enhance their reputation or to obtain social *rewards*. People may help others to gain praise, attention, rewards, honor, or gratitude. They may make charitable contributions to improve their image and to gain the approbation of others.

Another form of altruism that is actually based on a selfish motive is the reduction of *experienced distress*—one person helps another simply to avoid feeling distress at the other's pain. A form of pure, undiluted altruism is based on *empathy*—the feeling of concern for another person after observing and being moved by that person's needs. Experimenters have found clever ways to distinguish between people who help for empathic and nonempathic reasons. Those who help for egoistic distress-avoidance reasons actually show different physiological patterns than those who help for empathic reasons. People who live in rural settings are more likely to help others than people who live in urban settings.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we examined altruism and the meaning of aggression. We also discussed types of aggression. The types of aggression discussed include:

- hostile aggression
- instrumental aggression
- relational aggression

Study Session 12

Research Methods in Social Psychology

Introduction

To understand our social environment better and to be able to predict and understand the processes of social influence and interaction, we have to go through scientific research. The four methods of scientific research in social psychology are: (i) naturalistic observation, (ii) survey method, (iii) correlational studies, and (iv) experiment. These methods shall be the focus of this Study Session.



Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Study Session, you should be able to:

- i. *utilize* naturalistic observation method in social psychology research.
- ii. *utilize* survey method in social psychology research.
- iii. *utilize* correlational studies method in social psychology research.
- iv. *utilize* experimental method in social psychology research.

12.1 Naturalistic Observation Method

The best method of studying human behaviour in real life situation is through naturalistic observation. By this, we mean that an individual is observed in reality as he behaves and will behave naturally in the actual situation without interference, purposely or otherwise, from the observer, experimenter, researcher or investigator. However, a scientific approach is still needed for the result(s) observed to be generalizable, reliable and valid. Most important is the operational definition of the behaviour of interest. For example, if we are interested in aggressive behaviour of children at a playground then we have to define what is meant by aggressive behaviour. Could aggressive behaviour be defined as a strike on fellow playmates, frequency of strike by a special individual, intensity of strike or a shout at fellow playmates or the loudness of shout, or taking another's toy without permission and so on? By defining the behaviour of interest, we are able to conceptualize the issue that is of interest to us. In addition, it will be possible for the study on that particular behaviour to be reliable (replicable) and valid (or specific).

Another way of ensuring reliability and validity is by direct participation in the mini society of interest, i.e. through participant observation method. Here, the researcher has first-hand experience of what he/she is interested in and is able to avoid suspicious, with the advantage of using mechanical aids such as video recorders, hidden cameras, one-way mirrors, etc. Another form of the observation method which can be subsumed under naturalistic observation is the archival method of study. This entails the use of the national archives, libraries, museums and other related institutions and the serving of "relevant" information out of the

files. There are disadvantages though e.g. falsification of facts by the initial recorders, failure to update information, and subjectivity. It should be noted, however, that there are some limitations in participant observational method. These include the following:

- a. Limitations imposed by the researchers taking a role – the researcher, by virtue of the very fact that he plays a role in the group may impose certain restrictions upon his own understanding of the situation. Once the observer becomes a full-fledged member of the group, familiarity may lead him to take certain things for granted. He may lose his sensitivity to the possibility of latent patterns and may adopt the attitudes and stereotypes of his informants or, at times, he may jump to conclusions.
- b. How to avoid/manage the limitations – the personality of the researcher, his public identity, his habits, value and what some people call ‘native intelligence’ – is his greatest asset. He can, for example, govern to a certain extent the control effect and the biased view point effect by the way he establishes his presence. He may openly let his subjects know that they are being studied or may not reveal his real identity, assuming some plausible role such as taking a job.
- c. Finally, participant observational method might lead to death e.g. when members of the secret society he is studying get to know about his activity.

12.2 Survey Method

This involves construction of questionnaires and/or rating scales to measure/study issues that are particularly difficult to study by observation, e.g. attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and views. The questionnaire/survey method involves asking people predetermined questions which are often derived from literature and theoretical reviews, on the subject matter that is of interest. People’s (respondents’) responses can be guided on their format such as having the Likert-type responses of SA, A, U, D, SD, or left open to be coded later on by the researcher. The important thing is that the questionnaire is valid if it measures what it purports to measure or intended to measure; while it is reliable if it is reproducible, dependable and consistent in its measurement. To make a questionnaire valuable further, we must ensure that (a) we take a random sample of target population (because it is not possible to use all people in a study); (b) once the sample has been selected, those chosen must be asked to participate; and (c) the items in the questionnaire are phrased in simple and understandable language that will make the respondents willing to respond to them. Sometimes questionnaires are in form of tests, scale and/or inventories. A test has an important place in contemporary psychology as an instrument of research. It is used to measure all kinds of abilities, interests, attitudes, personality characteristics and accomplishments. By means of tests, large quantities of data can be obtained from people in factories or hospitals or schools, and so on.

12.3 Correlation Method

This method is adopted when the researcher is interested in knowing the extent to which two or more variables are related. If they are suspected to have a relationship, then the correlational method is employed. The variables are sometimes present in the individuals. For example, if it is suspected that the cooler an environment is, the more the tendency to smoke cigarette, what the researcher does is find two varying conditions in terms of temperature and subject people who smoke to these conditions. The researcher then compares the number of cigarette sticks smoked by individuals in the two groups. The relationship is analyzed using a statistical test of t-independent groups.

Another correlational method is comparing the heights of basketball players against ability to play if it is suggested that the two variables have relationship. To do this, we have to determine which is the dependent variable and which is the independent variable. The dependent variable is the one on which measure is taken, in this case ability to play. The independent variable is the one which is believed to have *influence* on the dependent variable, in this case, height. All the researcher needs to do is categorize ability into good or bad and compare the heights of players who fall under each category using Pearson-moment correlation statistical test: What will result is a ratio. If a ratio of 0.80 is got from the analysis, then it can be concluded that a high relationship exists between height of people and ability to play basketball. In other words, the taller the individual, the better his ability to play basketball. This is a positive correlation. We can also get a negative correlation in that if the variable increases, the other will decrease. We can get a zero correlation where there is no relationship or a perfect relationship if change of about 5% in one variable brings about a change of about 5% in another variable.

There are disadvantages in this method however. For example, we cannot establish a causal relationship between the variables. That is, we cannot say a variable will cause or causes a change in another. This is a great limitation of this method. In addition, we have no control over other plausible explanations for the observed change(s) in the dependent variable. The two advantages inherent in the use of correlational method of research are: that a correlational study is an efficient way of collecting a large amount of data about a problem area; and that a correlational technique also sometimes enables us to study problems to which experimental methods may not be applicable.

12.4 Experimental Method

This technique is the one that best enables us to establish a cause and effect relationship, i.e. we can actually determine whether a variable can “cause” a change in another variable and sometimes by how much (degree and intensity). In conducting experiments, social psychologists follow the procedures that are standard practice in all experimental sources (Lindgren, 1973), i.e. he sets up an experiment under carefully-controlled conditions to isolate only the variable of interest. The experiments can be either field or laboratory experiments. In a field experiment, the researcher has the advantage of manipulating the

independent variable(s) and observing its (their) effect(s) on variables of interest (dependent variable) in the field or natural setting, e.g. Balogun (1991). In this field experiment, Balogun manipulated the effects of bargaining strategy and mode of dressing on bargaining outcomes in open markets. He created two types of bargaining strategies (tough and soft) and two types of dressing mode (formal and informal) and asked people (subjects) to dress in either from using either of the strategies in an attempt to buy something from the open market. The intention was to see which combination will elicit better bargaining outcomes in terms of financial gains or behavioural responses from sellers. The added advantage of this method is that in social psychological students, we can make things happen by introducing our own variables of interest.

Another experimental method is the use of laboratory experiments. Here, a near-perfect real situation is stimulated in a room where other sources (extraneous variables) have been removed from the simulated conditions in order not to interfere with behaviour(s) of interest. The researcher then brings in people (subjects) into the simulated conditions manipulating the independent variable. For example, if a researcher is interested in the effect of noise on concentration/memory span, what he will do is to create a situation where there will be noise and where there will be no noise or vary the degree of noise level and randomly assign subjects who have been matched on other factors like sex, age, intelligence, etc into the different noise groups. He will then present them with a task of listening to a list of words to memorize and recall later. With the use of appropriate statistical method, the researcher will be able to tell whether or not noise (or the level of it) has effect on ability to recall. This kind of research and method is quite useful in Nigeria today where there is noise pollution from commercial motor drivers, churches and mosques, record vendors and so on.

At present, however, emphasis is shifting to evaluative research. In this research method, researchers are interested in knowing the degree to which an intervention (by introducing a programme) is successful or not in addressing the issue at stake. For example, how has Nigerian behaviour in respect of cleanliness changed as a result of monthly environmental exercises, how has Nigerian behaviour changed in respect of child bearing as a result of the introduction of family planning methods, and what change in respect of treating naira notes has resulted from government's "war" against such habits, and has the Federal Government of Nigeria been able to eliminate tribalism and ethnocentrism in Nigeria as a result of the compulsory national service (NYSC) for graduates of our universities and other allied institutions?

These are examples of questions that evaluative research sets out to tackle. Its method can be said to be eclectic in that all the already mentioned approaches to scientific study may be employed by the researcher. However, as warned earlier, the method mentioned here are not exhaustive and exclusive of other methods that may be employed from time to time by researchers in social psychology. In fact, a number of variations may be brought in by the researcher without any prejudice. As observed by Lindgren (1973) "fooling around with research techniques is probably much more common" in an attempt to solve any given social behaviour.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we noted that our social environment can be better understood, and we can be able to predict behaviour through scientific research. The four methods of scientific research in social psychology are consequently explored. The methods are:

- 1) naturalistic observation,
- 2) survey method,
- 3) correlational studies, and
- 4) experimental method.

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