



Social Psychology

Unit 5:
Individual and Group Behaviour

Social Psychology

Social Psychology - the study of how our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behaviours are influenced by interactions with others.

Schachter's (1959) *The Psychology of Affiliation*

Designed an experiment to test if people suffering from a high level of anxiety are more likely to seek out company than those who feel less anxious.

The Experiment

College students come to his lab and are greeted by Dr. Gregor Zilstein...

Group 1 (high anxiety): told they would be receiving a series of painful electric shocks to study the effect of electricity on the body.

Group 2 (low anxiety): told the shocks would be mild and painless, that they would inflict a ticklish, tingling sensation.

Both groups were then told they would have to wait for the experiment to start and were asked if they would prefer to wait alone or with other participants in a large room.

Why do we need friends?

- As infants we rely on others to satisfy basic needs.
- In this interaction we learn to associate close personal contact with the satisfaction of basic needs.
- Being around others becomes a habit, difficult to break. We have developed needs for rewarding experiences such as:
 - praise
 - respect
 - love and affection
 - the sense of achievement



How we choose friends

1. Proximity

- Physical distance from home and work
- Result of the fear and embarrassments most people have about making contact with strangers
- Proximity gives people an excuse to talk to one another without risk of rejection.

How we choose friends

2. Reward Values

- **Stimulation value**
 - the ability of a person to interest you in or expose you to new ideas and experiences
- **Utility Value**
 - the ability of a person to help another achieve his or her goals
- **Ego-Support Value**
 - the ability of a person to provide another person with sympathy, encouragement, and approval



How we choose friends

3. Physical Appearance

- Influences others' impressions of one another
- People feel better about themselves when they associate with people whom others consider desirable
- Influences choices of friends as well as lovers
- People who do not fit society's standards for beauty are often viewed in an unfavorable light

In one study participants were shown pictures of men and women of varying degrees of physical attractiveness and were asked to rate their personality traits. Attractive people were seen as more sensitive, poised, modest and sociable

How we choose friends

4. Approval

- We tend to like people who agree with and support us
- Makes us feel better about ourselves

How we choose friends

5. Similarity

- People tend to choose friends whose backgrounds, attitudes, and interests are similar to their own
- There are several explanations for the power of shared attitudes
 - sharing activities - doing more things together
 - most feel uneasy about constantly being challenged
 - people who agree find it easier to communicate and argue less

How we choose friends

5. Complementarity

- Attraction between opposite types of people
- Not uncommon, despite the power of similarity though most agree similarity is more important.
- Researchers have unable to verify that “opposites attract”

Design a greeting card that emphasizes one of the factors influencing interpersonal attraction.

Application Activity

5 marks

Social Perception

Forming impressions of others and interpreting their actions.

- Helps us place people into categories where the knowledge and assumptions we make contribute to *schemas*.
- Schemas allow us to organize information so that we can respond appropriately in social situations.
- Can influence or distort our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviours.

Stereotypes: schemas developed for entire groups of people

First Impressions

Primacy Effect: the tendency to form opinions based on first impressions.

ex) Guest Lecture

Two psychology classes were given identical lecture by the same presenter who was described to them as either **warm** or **cold**. After the lecture reviews of the presenter were completely different.

- Warm condition: friendly, relaxed, and concerned
- Cold condition: humorless, ruthless, self-centered

Attribution Theory

How we interpret and understand the behaviour of others.

- Internal attributions - attributing behaviour to personal characteristics
- External attributions - attributing behaviour to a particular situation

Fundamental Attribution Error: The tendency to attribute other people's behaviour to internal causes while using external attributes to explain our own behaviour.

ex) Somebody speeding by you and cutting you off in traffic

Self-Serving Bias - Tendency to claim success is due to our efforts, while failure is due to circumstances beyond our control.

ex) Receiving an A on a test

Your friend helped you wash your car because...

- a) She is nice.
- b) She wanted to impress your parents, who were watching.
- c) She owed you a favor.

Attribution Theory

Rate each example as either an internal or external attribution.

Love Relationships

90% of people end up in a marriage --- 40% end in divorce

2 Common Types of Love

1. Passionate Love

- very intense, sensual, and all-consuming
- almost an element of danger - losing it at any moment
- usually fades

2. Compassionate Love

- includes friendship, liking someone, mutual trust, and wanting to be with them
- more stable
- includes commitment and intimacy

Triangular Theory of Love

Intimacy (feeling)

- closeness we feel to another person.

Passion (motivating)

- physical arousal and attraction.

Commitment (thinking)

- realizing a relationship is love and we desire to maintain it over time.

