

Prosocial Behaviour: The Waning Trait

Lata Sati

Research Scholar, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, PAU, Ludhiana

Abstract: Prosocial behavior refers to voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals. It includes broad range of activities like sharing, comforting, rescuing and helping. Today people help if they get return help or for prestige. Only few people are prosocial in true sense. So there is need to focus on why this trait is waning? Perceiving a need in others does not always lead to sufficient motivation to help. We may be less likely to help those who have no power to return the favor. Gender differences were also found in prosocial behavior. Males were found to be more helpful in broader public sphere, toward strangers and in emergencies. They help women more than men. Women are more likely to help in the family sphere in close relationship, and in situations that require repetitive contact. Cultural differences and individual person current mood also influences prosocial behavior. In today's society family relationship has changed, lack of role model to demonstrate prosocial behavior, relationship with neighbours has changed as they have become exchange relationship rather than communal. In schools team work is not encouraged, instead competition is encouraged. Prosocial behavior can be increased by decreasing pluralistic ignorance and diffusion of responsibility, increase competence to help. Education about bystander indifference and moral inclusion. If prosocial behavior will increase among people it will improve organizational working, smooth functioning of society, decrease in anti social acts and trustworthy relationships.

Keywords: Prosocial, Bystander, Pluralistic ignorance

1. Introduction

Prosocial behavior intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals. It includes broad range of activities like sharing, comforting, rescuing and helping. Though very often prosocial behavior is confused with altruism, they are in fact two distinct concepts. Prosocial behavior refers to a pattern of activity, whereas, altruism is the motivation to help others out of pure regard for their needs rather than how the action will benefit oneself. Someone might act in a prosocial manner out of self-interest- he or she hopes to get something in return. Altruism is helping purely out of the desire to benefit someone else, with no benefit to oneself. Prosocial act is rewarding (Tabibnia *et al* 2008), and may make the recipient want to return the favor (Cialdini 2006). More indirect benefits may come in the form of reputational credit or prestige, making conspicuous prosociality an adaptive social strategy (Barclay and Willer 2007). Prosocial behavior may be proximally motivated through a need to maintain a positive moral identity or self-concept (Gino *et al* 2011; Chakroff and Tom 2012). We may behave unethically (or withhold prosocial behavior) only to the extent that we can still justify our moral identities to ourselves (Mazar *et al* 2008). Thus, people may behave unethically when they can do so indirectly. People likely to donate to strangers face-to-face than unseen strangers (Rege and Telle, 2004) and named than unnamed strangers (Charness and Gneezy 2008). People are also more likely to behave well when their actions are known to an identified third party (Franzen and Pointer 2012). People are even sensitive to the mere idea of accountability, acting more prosocially in the presence of a picture of watchful eyes (Nettle and Bateson 2011; Gervais and Norenzayan 2012). Conversely, people may withhold help or act selfishly when their identity is obscured by darkness, or when they are unidentified in a group (Zhong *et al* 2010; Hirsh and Galinsky 2011). Regardless of the evolutionary origins of altruistic behavior, even in the absence of true biological altruism, we need not predict that individuals never act out of "genuine" altruistic motivations.

There are psychological capacities that make an individual to engage in prosocial behavior i.e. Acting to intentionally benefit others first requires that one perceive others - other living beings with needs and desires - in other words, acting to benefit others requires social cognition (Hippel and Trivers 2011).

However, perceiving a need in others does not always lead to sufficient motivation to help. We may be less likely to help those who have no power to return the favor. Prosocial behavior requires not only the perception of an opportunity to help, but the motivation to act. This motivation may be rooted in empathetic processes, through feeling the pain of another, and desiring to reduce the pain. The motivation to help others may also require the ability to anticipate some future reward, whether that reward is anticipated reciprocity.

In some instances, people who act for reputational credit may feel licensed to behave selfishly once they feel they have earned sufficient social credit (Sachdeva *et al* 2009).

In virtually all cultures, there are different norms for males and females, so that men and women learn to value different traits and behaviours. Male sex role is to be chivalrous and heroic, whereas part of the female sex to be nurturing and caring, valuing close, long-term relationship. That why men generally help more in situation that call for brief chivalrous and heroic acts while women to help in long-term relationships that involve less danger but more commitment, such as volunteering at a nursing home.

Males

- i) More helpful in broader public sphere, toward strangers and in emergencies.
- ii) Help women more than men.

Women

- i) More likely to help in the family sphere in close relationship, and in situations that require repetitive contact.
- ii) More likely to receive help.

Einolf (2011), found that women scored higher on most measures of the traits, motivations, and values that predict helping others, and women are more likely to help family and friends.

Western cultures tend to be individualistic and have an independent view of the self, whereas people who grow in many non-western cultures tend to be collectivist and have an interdependent view of the self. Because people with an interdependent view of the self are more likely to define themselves in terms of their social relationships and have more of a sense of “connectedness” to others, it might seem as if they would be more likely to help person in need. People are more likely to help someone they define as a member of their **in group**, which is the group with which an individual identifies and feels he or she is a member. People everywhere are less likely to help someone they perceive to be a member of an **out group**, a group with which the individual does not identify. Trust is prerequisite for civic engagement (Allik and Realo, 2004).

Helping behavior influenced by person's current mood. Sometimes one feels up and sometimes feel down and these transitory emotional states are another key determinant of prosocial behavior. The streams of research reviewed that happy people give more, and that giving makes people happy (Piliavin 2003). Thus, we explored whether the link between happiness and prosocial spending runs in a circular motion, such that recollections of previous prosocial spending makes people happier, and in turn, more likely to engage in prosocial spending in the future. Wang and Graddy (2008) suggest that happy people are both more emotionally capable to help others and have more optimistic personalities, fostering charitable giving behavior. Konow and Earley (2008) also argued that happier people give more because they are fueled by their positive emotions.

2. Why it is Waning?

Change in Family

- Quality of the parent-child relationship.
- Lack of connectedness as emotional attachments are weak.
- Prosocial behaviour increases when parents are warm, supportive, responsive, and sensitive to their children's needs. In contrast, less prosocial behavior is found among children whose parents are authoritarian, strict, or punitive.
- Lack of role models to display prosocial behaviour.
- Family set-up has changed.

Change in Neighborhood

Communal versus exchange relationship

Most of helping in everyday life occurs between people who know each other well: family members, lovers, close friends. It is important to point out, however, that when people know each other well, they are often more concerned with the long term benefits of helping than with the immediate effects.

Communal relationships are those in which people's primary concern is with the welfare of the other person, whereas exchange relationships are those that are governed by concerns about equity—that what you put into the relationship

equals what you get out of it. People in communal relationships are less concerned with the benefits they will receive by helping, and more with simply satisfying the needs of the other person. People in communal relationships pay less attention to who is getting what than people in exchange relationships do. Helping in exchange relationships appears to be governed by rules and norms that differ from those governing helping in communal relationships. In exchange relationships, people are concerned more with who is getting what, and they get upset if the scales are tipped too far toward one person. In communal relationships, people are concerned less with who gets what and more with how much help the other person needs.

Change in Schools

- Time constraints and expectations.
- Competing demands.
- Anxiety and aggression.
- Team work is not encouraged.

Change in Society

- 1) Social exclusion caused a substantial reduction in prosocial behavior. The effect was mediated by feelings of empathy for another person but was mediated by mood, self-esteem, belongingness, trust, control or self-awareness. The implication is that rejection temporarily interferes with emotional responses, thereby impairing the capacity for empathic understanding of others, and as a result, any inclination to help or cooperate with them is undermined (Twenge *et al* 2007).
- 2) In accord with this view, recent research has shown that individuals who report habitually experiencing gratitude engage more frequently in prosocial behaviors than do individuals who experience gratitude less often (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002).
- 3) Martin and Huebner (2007) found that a higher rate of prosocial interactions was linked to greater life satisfaction. As people are less satisfied with their life so is the cause of waning prosocial traits among people.

How Can Helping be Increased?

- Decrease distractions.
- Decrease pluralistic ignorance.
- Decrease diffusion of responsibility.
- Increase competence to help.
- Educate about bystander indifference.
- Teach moral inclusion.
- Guilt and concern for self-image.
- Learning about altruism- over justification effect.

3. Implication

- 1) Useful for non-profit professionals who are developing or striving to improve organizational practices of building human and financial resources.
- 2) Feeling of welfare hence smooth functioning of society.
- 3) Decrease anti-social acts.
- 4) Builds relationship.

4. Conclusion

Prosocial behavior depends on numerous mental processes working in concert. We must first perceive an opportunity for acting prosocially, and then we must motivate ourselves to act. We should not impose help on everyone we meet, whether the person wants it or not. Research on reactions to help indicates that under certain conditions, receiving help can have damaging effects on a person's self-esteem. The goal is to make the help supportive, highlighting your concern for the recipient, rather than using the helping encounter to communicate your superior knowledge and skill.

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