



ROLE OF SELF FOCUSED MORAL EMOTIONS ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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INTRODUCTION:

Everyday in our lives we express our emotions, through aggression, sadness, happiness etc. but never did we realise the value of emotions that they are much beyond the general way of expressing ourselves. They have an impact on our lives more than just through facial expressions but also in other ways such as they impacts and guide our actions and behaviors. Various researchers have shown through their work that emotions motivate us for acts of kindness, perform duties which are beyond selfish means, in reality engage in prosocial acts. Through this paper I will cover up this important impact of our emotions on our actions.

Emotions:

Emotions are subjective and inherited, they occur due to our appraisals of events that unfold in our lives; they impact our judgments and reasoning. They can be self conscious emotions or other focused emotions; self conscious emotions are those where emotions occur due to self evaluative process, whereas on the other hand other focused emotions are those which are displayed or felt in the absence of self evaluative process for example being fearful after seeing a dog, being happy while playing with kids. Though these emotions seem different but when we analyze the situation closely we can see they are interlinked for instance while playing with

children if an individual is liked and is happy while the children are also happy, he will attribute this event to his own good qualities hence instead of the emotion experienced by other of happiness, it will be more because of self evaluation in this situation and leading to feelings of pride (Tracy & Robins, 2004). These self conscious emotions such as pride, guilt, shame and embarrassment can arise from any situation depending on the individual's appraisals and they regulate our thoughts, behaviors and feelings (Campos, 1995; Fischer & Tangney, 1995), drive an individual to work hard in different tasks (Weiner, 1985) and encourage an individual to behave morally and in appropriate ways with others (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Retzinger, 1987).

From all these points we can conclude the importance of these emotions in our lives. Shame is mainly used to mediate the emotional consequences of social stigma (Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 2002) and other than guiding our behavior this specific emotion has a very important role in depression and different personality disorders (Harder, Cutler, & Rockart, 1992; Lewis, 1971; Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992). Guilt on the other hand leads an individual to give second thoughts to the actions performed and provides another chance for undoing the wrong done, hence it is mainly involved in prosocial behavior such as empathy, altruism and providing care (Batson, 1987; Baumeister et al., 1994; Tangney & Dearing, 2002); pride is another main contributor in boosting the self esteem of an individual (Brown & Marshall, 2001) thus increasing the chances of an individual to engage in prosocial behaviors. These emotions discussed so far not only have a role in guiding our behaviors they also help in adapting an individual to various different situations for instance researchers state that pride evolved for being dominant on others, shame for avoiding social approval and guilt for encouraging communal relationships (Baumeister et al., 1994; Gilbert, 1998; Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Tracy & Robins, 2004b). Various researchers have seen that these emotions embarrassment, pride and shame are similar across cultures (Haidt & Keltner, 1999; Izard, 1971)

Moral Emotions:

Moral emotions represent important but often ignored elements of our lives. Moral emotions may be critically important in understanding people's behavioral compliance or lack of compliance to their moral standards. Morality is an omnipresent construct within all spheres of life. Regardless of one's culture, race or social strata, moral issues play a key role in human behavior. According

to Kroll & Egan (2004) moral emotions provide an individual with the motivation and energy to do well and to avoid doing badly to others. These are feelings related to the interest and welfare of others rather than one's own (Haidt, 2003). These are of various types self-conscious moral emotions and other-focused moral emotions. In self-conscious moral emotions the emotion is elicited when some aspect of the self is scrutinized and evaluated with respect to moral standards. These are further divided into two types based on their valence; negative valence emotions and positive valence emotions; negative valence emotions consist of shame and guilt. Lewis (1971) has explained shame and guilt as negative evaluation of the global self and negative evaluation of specific behavior respectively; positive valence emotions are moral pride, gratitude and elevation. According to Mascolo & Fischer (1995) pride is an emotion which is generated by appraisals that one is responsible for a socially valued outcome or for being a socially valued person. And from this perspective pride serves to enhance people's self-worth and encourages engaging in behavior that conforms to social standards of worth and merit, (Barrett, 1995). Other-focused positive moral emotion elevation as defined by Haidt, (2000) is that positive emotion which is elicited when observing others behaving in a particularly virtuous, admirable, or exceptional way. Gratitude on the other hand is an emotion which is felt when an individual is a recipient of benefits provided by another, especially when those benefits are unexpected or costly to the benefactor.

Prosocial Behavior:

Prosocial behavior represents a broad category of acts that are defined by some significant segment of society or one's social group as generally beneficial to other people. Although it has been easy to define this concept but as we look at the work of past researchers we realize how this word has influenced our lives and the complexity of various factors contributing for its development is wide and varied. It is very important that we try and understand how and what motivates an individual to help others without any personal motives? What factors influence it?

It is understood as a proactive and reactive response to the needs of others, which then serves to promote the well-being of other individuals. According to Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, & Emde (1992) genetics strongly contribute to the development of pro-social behavior in children. As explained by the psycho-evolutionary theory (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987) self-conscious emotion

such as empathy emotions have a functional role to guide actions that motivate an individual to engage in care giving actions which helps in building social and emotional bonds.

From the review of past researches conducted in this field it can be understood that prosocial development is influenced by various factors such as age, sex, culture, different parenting styles an individual is exposed to etc.

Researchers have found the role of socialization for development of pro social behavior such as impact of an individual's relationship with the parents that can be either by the various parenting styles used by them to rear the children or by seeing themselves engage in various pro social acts themselves such as doing good to others, volunteering for benefit of others Hoffman (1970, 2000). The way parents discipline their children through warmth and care and at the same time teaching them how to differentiate from right to wrong, using of other – oriented reasoning styles which encourage them to focus on the needs of others is important for pro social development. Use of authoritative parenting styles where parents are warm towards their children, enjoy shared activities and provide praise more than criticism encourage and motivate a child to take the perspective of others through both cognitive and affective mechanisms, parents themselves engage in pro social actions which increases the likelihood of children engaging and learning such actions (Hastings et al., 2000). Not solely the parenting styles used but also secure attachments in early childhood with parents support pro social development (Mikulciner & Shaver, 2005).

Dunn and Munn, 1986 found through various experimental studies that not solely relations with parents contribute for pro social development but also having an older sibling and the relation an individual shares with these siblings provides a platform for children to learn social behavior for good or for bad.

Wentzel, 2003 studied that the relation an individual shares with his peers and friends, popularity amongst them, the way a child is perceived by them impacts pro social development. Other than peers the quality of student- teacher relation, experiences at school contributes for this (Kienbaum, 2001). Above all very interestingly it has been found that the size of the school can also impact prosocial development because it determines how often children see familiar faces, lack of familiarity increases anonymity of students and leads to reduced prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, 1986).

Till now we were studying the role played by socialization in close circles and its impact on pro social behavior but these are not the sole contributors for this, the community and the society

where the child is brought up and reared also has contributions to make in this area. It has been studied in various studies that involvement in community – minded activities and volunteering to engage in activities in childhood in those activities which is for the welfare of others has positive benefits for the individual (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Pancer & Pratt, 1999). Not only the active role played by the child contributes for prosocial developmental but also culture can impact this domain even if the child is passive by just being a part of some particular culture, by imposing various cultural norms, for example in collectivistic cultures helping others is encouraged and praised while on the other hand in individualistic cultures since childhood a child is taught to be independent and not seek help and depend on others (Turiel, 1998; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

By looking at the above mentioned view point it can be understood that children’s actions are not solely shaped by environment alone or developmental forces, rather the two combined impact the way the child acts and reacts to others actions, (Bell, 1968; Patterson, 1982; Sameroff, 1975).

Children are born with dispositions for empathy, caring for others but unless the environment is not conducive for up liftment of these traits an individual’s likelihood of engaging in such actions is very limited, hence parents and other socializing agents present in the child’s environment such as his peers, siblings, teachers and the society at large has to tailor their actions so that it helps in fostering of these inherited traits (Kuczynski, 2003).

Various researches conducted worldwide also indicate towards gender differences in pro social development, it has been found that that girls and women are more pro social than boys and men. And it has been studied that parental goals for sex- typed socialization brings individual differences in pro social behaviors (Zahn- Waxler, 2000).

According to the social learning theory, with the help of various experiments it was seen that children who witnessed a competent model engage in pro social behavior increased the likelihood that the child himself engage in such an action (Harris, 1970; Yarrow & Scott, 1972). Not only observing a model increased behavior but also the attribution styles an individual uses impacts this behavior (Rushton, 1975; Grusec, Kuczynski, Rushton, & Simutis, 1978). Thus from all these studies we can understand how does learning experiences contribute for pro social development.

Self conscious emotions

Both shame and guilt are negative emotions and both can cause intra psychic pain. They have been usually understood as overlapping terms but due to advancement of research on these emotions researchers can clearly set a boundary between them. Shame is considered the more

painful emotion because in this one's core self is at stake. Feelings of shame are typically accompanied by a sense of sinking of worthlessness and powerlessness. Shamed people also feel exposed. Although shame does not necessarily involve an actual observing audience present to witness one's shortcomings, there is often the imagery of how one's defective self would appear to others. Guilt on the other hand is a less painful and less devastating experience because the object of disapproval is a specific behavior not the entire self. Rather than needing to defend the exposed core of one's identity, people experiencing guilt are drawn to consider their behavior and its consequences. This makes an individual experience remorse, tension and regret over the bad action performed (Lewis, 1971). Hence the guilt makes him prone to making amendments by helping others (Ferguson & Stegge, 1998). Empirical evidences have shown that guilt promotes constructive and proactive pursuits to undo the wrong doing.

Studies conducted by Chapman, Zahn- Wxaler, Cooperman, & Ianotti (1987) found that children who were predisposed for guilt were more likely to engage in helping adults, infants and animals. Whereas on the other hand guilt not only impacts in a positive way but it may also make individuals less prosocial (Bybee & Williams, 1994). Baumeister et al (1994) stated that guilt helps to engage in behavior which will threaten a relationship and it acts as a reminder to not engage in offending behavior again but continuous and excessive guilt hampers prosocial behavior.

Tangney and Dearing (2002) conducted a longitudinal study and found that adolescents' guilt and shame proneness remained stable till 18 years old. Whereas Bybee, (1998) found decrease in guilt during adolescence. Eisenberg, Cumberland, Cuthrie, Murphy, and Shepard (2005) got similar results on their longitudinal study. Moral emotions promote behavior that is beneficial to others (Frank, 1988, 2004; Ketelaar, 2004; Smith, 1759). However, such prosocial effects have been mainly been found for guilt but mainly for shame (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2007). Ketelaar and Au (2003) found in a study that people who were selfish acted in a more prosocial way when they faced guilt in social dilemmas. In shame there is a threatened or damaged self (Lewis, 1971). Therefore when experiencing shame an individual will withdraw from the social circles (i.e., leaving or hiding), Tangney et al., 1996, and sometimes will engage in prosocial manner (Goldberg, 1991).

CONCLUSION:

If we look at the work contributed by various researchers so far in the field of prosocial behavior we can see the various factors impacting it, the culture, parenting styles, peer relations, relationship with siblings etc, in all these areas we have got clarity regarding their contribution. Thus it is essential for us as professionals to understand the contributions our emotions can make on prosocial behavior and thus inculcate such principles that this important function of our emotions is understood and thus used to promote the well being of others.

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