

Psychology of Emotion: Theory and Applications
Professor Dilwar Hussain
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
Module 6, Lecture 13: Emotions in Groups 1

I welcome you all to Lecture number 13 of the course titled "Psychology of Emotions: Theory and Applications." Today, we will begin module 6 that includes two lectures: Lecture 13 and Lecture 14, focusing on group emotions. We will explore how people express emotions and the dynamics of emotions within a group setting, not just in individual settings. Today's lecture is Lecture number 13, covering "Emotions in Group Part 1." Lecture number 14 will be Part 2, both discussing emotions within groups, how people collectively work together, experience and express emotions, and their consequences.

Before we delve into today's lecture, let me provide a brief recap of the previous lecture, Lecture Number 12. In the last module, we discussed the concept of positive emotions and happiness. Specifically, in the last lecture, we explored the Sustainable Happiness Model theory.

Essentially, we discussed a model that attempts to understand three major determinants of happiness: the genetic set point, life circumstances, and intentional activities. One of the significant takeaways from this model was that the genetic set point and life circumstances are generally not much within our control. However, intentional activities, the third component, are activities that we engage in, and choose to engage in, in our day-to-day functioning. This is where we can implement various interventions or activities to enhance happiness. We also discussed the types of activities supported by research evidence that can enhance happiness, along with possible mechanisms in those directions.

So today, we will be discussing emotions in groups. We will briefly touch upon historical accounts, and then delve into group emotions, particularly focusing on one major aspect: emotional contagion. We will discuss both automatic and intentional processes of emotional contagion. These are the topics we will cover in today's lecture. Let's begin.

Research has emphasized the significance of emotions in group dynamics. Whenever people engage in group activities or interact in social situations, emotions are bound to occur because most emotions are expressed within the context of interaction. Emotion lies at the center of group behavior and actions. Due to the potential for social interaction within groups, numerous emotional situations can arise, leading to the expression of emotions where there is significant interaction.

Therefore, without understanding the concept of emotions, we cannot fully grasp group dynamics. To comprehend group dynamics, it is essential to understand the display of emotions and their consequences in the group setting. Understanding group life, functioning, and dynamics in the context of emotions is critical. More specifically, understanding how group-level dynamics impact the way emotions are experienced is crucial. Whether people are in isolated or group situations, understanding how group dynamics and interactions influence the experience, display, and subsequent impact of emotions on behavior is vital. Group interactions can lead to emotional experiences, which, in turn, can influence group dynamics.

So it could be somewhat like this: Group behavior is bound to happen and tends to elicit different kinds of emotions. These emotions will further influence group behavior, thereby exerting directional influence. Now, let's provide a brief historical account of the context of emotions and how they have been historically viewed in group settings.

One of the first persons to discuss emotions in groups was Gustave Le Bon, a French psychologist who introduced the concept of the group mind and crowd behavior. Some of his ideas remain prominent and significant in psychological literature, especially regarding crowd behavior and the emergence of a group mind. One of his influential works, which is still relevant today, is "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind."

Le Bon suggested that prolonged exposure to large groups could cause individuals to become emotionally overwhelmed, impulsive, and lacking in critical judgment. He primarily focused on how people behave in group settings, particularly in crowds or large groups. He observed that when people engage in large group situations, they could become emotionally overwhelmed, impulsive, and lacking in critical judgment. This impulsiveness often leads to a diminishing of rationality, as individuals become overwhelmed by the emotional content expressed within the group setting.

He also discussed how individuals gather in groups and form a collective mind. This is significant when people behave in group or crowd settings, as it transitions from individual to collective thinking, directing behavior differently from individual minds. In crowds, people often lose rationality and independence, becoming more susceptible to group emotions and opinions. Consequently, individuals may abandon their individual thought processes and rationality, influenced more by group emotions.

The implications of this phenomenon are evident in situations where people become overwhelmed in crowds, leading to various negative consequences of crowd behavior. In crowds, people tend to act illogically, succumbing to group emotions and engaging in activities they wouldn't normally do alone. This loss of individuality and rationality in crowds leads to distinctive behaviors and characteristics, indicating a psychological transformation from individual to collective mindset.

Le Bon argued that crowds tend to be impulsive, emotional, and easily swayed by dominant ideas or leaders, making them vulnerable to impulsive actions. They are guided more by emotions than rationality, allowing leaders to manipulate them according to their wishes. Le Bon highlighted the anonymity of the crowd as a reason for such behavior, where individuals may engage in crimes or heinous acts they wouldn't otherwise commit individually.

One reason why this happens is the sense of reduced responsibility or division of responsibility, which is significant. In a crowd, individuals do not feel individually accountable for their actions. People often attribute actions to the crowd, saying phrases like "the crowd did it" or "the crowd killed someone." Consequently, individuals feel they won't be individually held responsible, leading to a diffusion of responsibility within the crowd. According to Le Bon, this diminished responsibility or division of responsibility is one reason why individuals engage in irrational acts, lack self-control, and do things they wouldn't do individually.

Crowd behavior can be very dangerous due to the diffusion of responsibility. Another aspect Le Bon discussed is emotional contagion, where emotions spread rapidly within the group,

intensifying collective emotional experiences. These ideas discussed by Le Bon represent some of the earliest references to emotions in group or crowd settings.

Another scholar who explored group behavior and emotions is Emil Durkheim, a pioneer sociologist. In his work "Elementary Forms of Religious Life," Durkheim examined the concept of group emotion. He discussed ideas similar to Le Bon's but focused more on rituals and collective consciousness, exploring how values and beliefs function within a group setting. Durkheim argued that in social groups, individuals are bound together by collective consciousness.

So, it is very similar to the idea of the collective mind that Le Bon talked about: a set of shared beliefs, values, and emotions. This collective consciousness is derived from the shared beliefs, values, and emotions. When a group of people shares beliefs, ideas, and values, they form a collective consciousness, and their behavior is guided by that. Therefore, this collective consciousness shapes the way group members experience and express emotions. In essence, this collective consciousness determines how members experience and express their emotions.

Durkheim also introduced the idea of collective effervescence, which basically means heightened emotional intensity experienced by individuals during group gatherings or rituals. Another thing that happens is that when people gather in a group, the intensity of emotional experiences gets heightened or becomes more intensified in the group setting when people are engaging in collective work or rituals together. This emotional energy arises from shared participation in collective activities and contributes to social cohesion and solidarity. Therefore, he also looks at this aspect in a more positive way, in the sense that it also fosters social cohesion. When people work together in a group, this emotional bond binds them together.

So, social cohesion and solidarity are enhanced when people collectively engage in activities, fostering cooperation, connection, and collaboration among each other. These positive aspects of collective emotions contribute to the overall positive impact of group interactions. While Leibniz focused more on how people become destructive in crowd settings due to the diffusion of responsibility, there are positive aspects to it as well. When people come together, cohesion and cooperation occur as they strive to collectively achieve something. Durkheim emphasized that rituals and symbols play a crucial role in fostering group emotions.

In group emotions, the rituals that people perform together and the use of group symbols—every organization or group typically has symbols for their identity—all serve to emotionally bind individuals together. These rituals and symbols play a crucial role in facilitating group emotions and strengthening bonds among members. Through participation in religious or cultural rituals, individuals become connected to the group's collective emotions, reinforcing social bonds and fostering a sense of belonging. These activities, rituals, and collective experiences generate emotions that help people connect with each other, reinforce social bonds, and provide a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging gives meaning to their lives and enhances their overall well-being.

So, in that sense, it can fulfil all these functions as a functioning aspect. Another psychologist, MacDougall, also discussed emotions in the group setting in the 1920s. He was a British psychologist who explored the concept of the group mind. In his work "The Group Mind: A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology," published in 1920, MacDougall proposed that the group mind emerges from the instinctual nature of individuals within a group.

So, people have an instinctive mind that emerges from this instinctual nature. It behaves very spontaneously, and when people are in a group setting, it automatically leads them to function as a group mind. This group mind emerges from the instinctive or instinctual nature of individuals within a group. There is an automatic instinct to connect and form groups because we are social animals. This instinctive mind facilitates the formation of this group's mind. Human beings possess innate social instincts that drive them to form groups and cooperate with others.

So, there is an instinctive nature in our minds; there are basic fundamental aspects or characteristics of the human mind that are inclined to connect with other people because that is the essence of being a social animal. This instinctive mind facilitates the emergence of the group mind and the experience of group emotions, among other things. In a group setting, emotions are contagious, as MacDougall suggests, because individuals are not alone; there are many other people expressing emotions, making it possible for emotions to spread from one person to another, especially when individuals are strongly connected within the group. Individuals can easily pick up and share the emotional states of others, as we naturally tend to pick up emotions when others express them, leading to similar emotional experiences. This emotional contagion creates collective emotional experiences that influence the behavior and attitudes of the group as a whole. The presence of group sentiment, as emphasized by MacDougall, explains why people collectively experience similar emotions; it is because of this contagion that spreads from one individual to another. Therefore, MacDougall highlights the presence of group sentiment, which aligns with similar phenomena explained by other scholars discussing concepts like collective mind and group sentiment.

The shared emotional bond, or group sentiment, is mostly rooted in emotional connection. When people collectively experience emotions that bond them together, it unites individuals within the group, forming group sentiments. This sentiment creates a collective identity and fosters a sense of unity and loyalty among the group members. Group sentiment is responsible for group connection and cohesion, instilling a sense of unity and loyalty among members. MacDougall also argued that the group mind possesses distinct characteristics and behaviors that differ from the individual mind. Similarly, Leibniz noted that the group mind could be very different from the individual minds of the individuals who are part of that group. In a group, individuals may exhibit behaviors and make decisions they would not otherwise do as individuals.

So, this group mind could be very different from the individual mind, as Leibniz also stated that individuals may engage in actions in a group setting that they would not do individually. This demonstrates that the group mind is distinct from the individual mind. Many of these early ideas, expressed by various researchers or theorists, have similarities. Research on the interplay between emotions and groups has only recently begun to attract attention. Not much research has been conducted since those initial ideas were proposed. Recently, however, a few researchers have garnered attention for their work on group emotions. This topic has received considerable attention from researchers in recent years. Over the past decades, there has been an expansion of research on emotions in groups, and it is now studied in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and management. When discussing emotions in groups, there are two important aspects: group emotions and emotions on behalf of the groups.

So, other members of the group did something, and as a result, you are experiencing some emotions on behalf of that group. For example, you may feel proud when members of your swim team break records at a state tournament. Similarly, you may feel shame when some members of your group behave badly, causing you to also feel bad about their actions. These emotions are experienced on behalf of the group with which you have a sense of connection or identity. They are known as emotions on behalf of the group. While these types of emotions may be distinct conceptually, they are intertwined in everyday life.

Both of these emotional phenomena are important because they frequently occur in situations where two groups are interacting. Understanding the interplay between these emotions and group processes can help resolve conflicts between groups. Therefore, comprehending these dynamics of emotions within groups is crucial for resolving conflicts and facilitating cooperation. It is within this intergroup context that we observe intense emotions such as anger, hatred, and fear among individuals. In today's lecture, we will discuss group emotions in more detail. Group emotions refer to emotions that are shared within collectives of individuals who are interacting with each other at a given moment in time.

So, this is a group of individuals in a particular moment, and they are all sharing one emotion because of something that is happening around them. It could be, for example, looking at your own team winning or achieving something collectively as a team, thus sharing joy and so on. This is what is called group emotions. So it's not individual; collectively we are experiencing something.

For instance, a small group, for example, may be energized with joy and excitement, while a crowd may become gripped by fear or galvanized into anger. A crowd can experience anger together and destroy something, or a group could experience fear and run away. Similarly, a group could experience joy together and celebrate. These are all examples we have seen in our day-to-day lives, and they are referred to as group emotions. The emotions of those around us can always affect our emotions in several ways.

Now, let us delve into the more details of group emotions, different aspects of group emotions. So, why do we collectively experience emotions together? One reason is that others in the group can influence us. You may be very different from others, but when you go into the group, your kind of merge with them, and others can influence your mind. Other people can influence our understanding of what we are feeling and the causes of our feelings, especially in situations where we may be unsure.

So sometimes you may not be personally very emotional about something, but when you mix with the group, you can get that kind of indication that others are experiencing joy or anger or whatever it is. So you may understand why others are experiencing something, and you can pick up that understanding, and you may feel those emotions. In that sense, you are influenced by other members in the group, which you individually might not have experienced, especially in situations where you are not very sure about what is happening.

You pick up things from others and experience that. Second, the mere presence of other people can affect the intensity of our emotions and our expressions of those emotions. Simply the presence of others could intensify our emotions. Individually, we may not really feel some emotions very strongly, but the same emotions, when we are around other people, can be

intensified. We all have experienced that because others can influence the expression of those emotions, which could be very strong because it is a collective phenomenon. You need to show to others, and others will also influence your understanding and your expression.

The study of group emotion has a long history, as we have already seen. It starts from Le Bon's idea of crowd mind and crowd behavior, which basically talks about group emotions only. So where basically groups provide a context for these emotional experiences. So after a period of neglect, there has been renewed interest in this topic in the last few decades. But still, group emotion is not very easy to measure and research because individually one can ask and find out data, but group emotion research is still challenging, and measuring part may be still very challenging. Probably that is why not much research has gone into it as compared to when we look at individual emotions and research into individual emotions.

So the main factors which we focus on here in the group emotion is emotional contagion. This is something how it spreads emotion in the group setting. Emotional contagion is a psychological phenomenon in which one person's emotions and related behaviors can directly influence or infect the emotions and behaviors of others. We all know we pick up emotions from others as social individuals when we are specially connected with other individuals, especially if we have a very strong connection. Whatever emotions other people experience, we pick them, and we also experience them to some extent, especially in the group setting. And whatever behavior they also do, we also pick up those behaviors that can influence and infect emotions and behaviors of other people.

So that's the idea of emotional contagion. It's the idea that emotions are socially contagious, spreading from one person to another, often without consciousness. Most of the time, such contagion could be very unconscious; you may not consciously pick it, but unconsciously, your whole emotions will change when others are expressing emotions around you. You will get tuned to those emotions. So, it's very simple; for example, if your loved one experiences sadness, we also feel sad because we kind of identify with that person, and we kind of love that person. And if that person experiences joy, we also feel joy. If that person experiences sadness, we also feel sadness. So it's kind of automatic; this is how social behavior, we as social animals, behave in social groups, and that kind of helps us to connect with other individuals. It's a very instinctive phenomenon. Similar things happen on a larger scale in group settings, and it can happen very unconsciously. Also, there can be some conscious part to it, but unconsciously also, this can spread. So people's emotions and related behaviors can be influenced and contagious within a social or group setting.

So it can be contagious; it spreads. In other words, individuals can catch or adopt emotions from others around them, leading to a shared emotional experience within the group. So it can lead to a shared emotional experience. This is how when it spreads from one person to another, and then it becomes shared. So everybody is experiencing the same emotion.

That is how it is shared because of the spread of emotions. This process can occur both consciously and unconsciously and plays a significant role in shaping group emotions and dynamics. So it can happen unconsciously also, and consciously also, some part of it. So emotional contagion can have both positive and negative consequences. I think it is very clear; it depends on the nature of emotions and how those emotions are expressed. On the positive side, because of this emotional contagion, we are bonded with others in the group, and it is also responsible for empathy by understanding others' perspectives, and so on. Social bonding is

happening because of this emotional contagion. That is a positive part of it. On the negative side, it can spread negative emotions also. So when a negative phenomenon happens and people experience negative emotions in the group, it can spread like wildfire and create conflicts and all the things that we see, riots, and other things.

One of the reasons is the spread of negative emotions in the group, which can become uncontrollable after a certain time and can lead to all kinds of horrible consequences. We have seen so many such instances, and it gets amplified; once it is shared in the group, it gets amplified, and the group can behave in such a way that individuals will never do such things. All the horrible things can happen. So that is the negative part of contagion, but everything has negative and positive aspects.

It can also bind people and collectively achieve something. So this concept of emotional contagion is well known in the fields of marketing and advertisements also. People use this idea kind of use this idea to promote some products and so on. For example, this is something very commonly used if you see canned laughter is something used very commonly which basically means recording of laughter to add humour. You might have we all might have seen you know certain advertisement or certain you know comedy serials and so on where people crack a joke or something and there is a background clapping will come together as if the group of people is clapping.

It is just sound only. So it adds impact or emotion. So it kind of helps in artificially creating an emotion which gets transferred to the audience or whoever is looking at it, and this has been found to be effective in a lot of contexts such as advertisements, television serials, and other mediums where you want to add some emotional impact. So in television shows and commercials, this has been used, and it is intended to elicit some positive emotions like happiness or laughter, and it changes audience attitudes as compared to when such impact is not added; when it is added, it impacts them much more strongly. This tactic has been shown to be effective in various research studies. With the rise of social media, some people also try to understand whether emotional contagion can happen even when people are not physically present. For example, there are many groups on Facebook and other platforms where people collectively form a group to discuss certain issues.

So there are thousands of such groups on social media where people come together to discuss common issues and topics, but they are not physically present; they are all connected virtually. Some studies have tried to see if emotional contagion can occur in this context. From our personal experience, it is evident that emotional contagion can happen strongly on social media, where both hatred and positive emotions can spread rapidly. A study conducted by Kramer and colleagues in 2014 investigated this question by manipulating the emotional content of Facebook users' news feeds.

So certain groups will generally receive certain news, and they manipulated some of the content to find that emotional states were collectively influenced by this manipulation within those groups, with reduced positive or negative content leading to corresponding changes in the emotional balance of the group's posts. This study was criticized because it is controversial due to ethical issues related to manipulating people's emotions on social media. However, it does demonstrate, as we all know from our own experiences, that a lot of emotions can spread collectively on social media, both positive and negative. Many instances exist where, not necessarily physically present, individuals can still experience emotional contagion in the

virtual world when they are connected. There is something called primitive emotional contagion, which is a type of emotional contagion that occurs unconsciously.

So Hatfield and her colleagues conducted research on this topic and highlighted the concept of primitive emotional contagion, which is particularly relevant in group emotions. Essentially, it refers to the most fundamental and instinctual form of emotional contagion, where individuals unconsciously mimic the emotions and expressions of others. Primitive emotional contagion occurs when emotions are spread from one person to another in a very unconscious way, and individuals unconsciously mimic these emotions without a conscious understanding. It involves the transmission of emotion through facial expressions, which is typically how most emotional spread occurs, although other aspects such as body language and tone of voice are also involved without conscious effort or cognitive processing. People automatically pick up on these cues without consciously thinking about it and experience similar emotions. According to Hatfield and her colleagues, emotional contagion can occur spontaneously and automatically without any effort to transmit or catch such emotions. We all know that emotions can be instinctively picked up in group settings.

So that is typically referred to as primitive emotional contagion. They also propose that individuals automatically and unconsciously mimic the emotional expressions of others, leading to a rapid and automatic sharing of emotions within a group. It can spread very rapidly because it operates at an unconscious level. When something is instinctive and unconscious, it spreads very quickly. This process is thought to occur at a more basic level, faster than cognitive empathy or perspective-taking, where one consciously thinks about something and understands others' perspectives.

Primitive emotional contagion operates at a much more basic and instinctive level, which is why it spreads faster. They focused on facial expressions as the primary medium through which emotional contagion occurs because the face is the most important component of emotions, where they are expressed. We have discussed a lot of these expressions in earlier lectures. This automatic mimicry of emotional expression is believed to lead to the synchronization of emotional states within a group.

Automatically, it happens and then synchronizes in the group. So this can create a shared emotional atmosphere or mood among individuals who are near. Automatically, people just synchronize with each other and share one emotion. Now, emotional contagion can have an evolutionary basis, meaning it can serve some important functions. When you talk about evolution, it means what important adaptive function it does.

So, that is the evolutionary perspective. It is important and serves adaptation. So, in that sense, the evolutionary perspective comes into the picture. Emotional contagion has evolutionary significance as it underlies perspective-taking and empathy, which are also very important evolutionary factors. Similar emotional responses can enhance social bonding within the group, especially when positive emotions are shared. So, it serves important functions of social bonding, which helps a group that is very similar to survive, adapt, and function. When a group is bonded together and experiences similar emotions, their chances of survival become higher.

So, in that sense, it has evolutionary functions. It may also lead to collective actions, which are crucial for the survival of social species like humans. In many instances, as a species, survival depends on collective actions, on how a group takes actions and protects itself. Emotional

contagion serves this purpose. It helps to bond people together and work collectively towards some purpose, which helps them to survive.

So, that is the evolutionary basis for it. There can be individual differences in emotional contagion as well; not everybody will pick up emotions similarly. Not everyone is equally prone to emotional contagion. Some people vary in their vulnerability, and they may immediately get absorbed into group emotions, while others are more resistant. So, it appears that there may be individual differences among individuals and their readiness to catch other people's emotions.

Individual differences could always exist. It depends on various factors like the temperament of the person, tendency to approach or withdraw, ability to concentrate and pay attention, and the intensity of emotional reactions; all these could influence the extent to which somebody will be vulnerable to emotional contagion. Some additional factors that could also lead to vulnerability to emotional contagion include gender. According to some research, women may be more sensitive to emotional cues and expressions, making them more susceptible to emotional contagion. So, women may be more susceptible because they are more sensitive to emotional cues.

Emotional contagion can happen more in women compared to men. Early life experiences can also influence it; parents, socialization, modelling, etc., can shape how we express and regulate emotions. So, your ability to express, regulate, and control your emotions based on your early life experiences can also determine the extent to which emotional contagion will occur. If you are able to regulate or control your emotions, there will probably be less vulnerability, but if you are not able to control and regulate your own emotions, you may be more vulnerable to emotional contagion. Some personality traits could also influence your vulnerability.

People with higher empathy and openness to new experiences may be more vulnerable to emotional contagion. Additionally, individuals with higher neuroticism may have a greater susceptibility to react to negative emotions.

People with higher empathy possess the ability to identify and understand the perspectives of others, making it easier for them to empathize and connect emotionally. Therefore, individuals with higher empathy levels may experience emotional contagion more intensely. Similarly, those who are open to new experiences and not closed-minded may also be more susceptible to emotional contagion.

On the other hand, individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to experience heightened emotional instability and nervousness. They may be more prone to worry and become easily absorbed by negative emotions. Therefore, individuals with high neuroticism traits may react more strongly to negative emotions and become deeply affected by them. These personality traits can significantly influence emotional contagion, leading to individual differences in susceptibility. To assess these differences, some researchers have developed scales such as the Emotional Contagion Scale.

So this scale can be used to assess one's own level of emotional contagion. By using this scale, individuals can determine their emotional contagiousness score. Moreover, cultural differences in emotional contagion may exist due to disparities in conformity and values regarding group norms. Different cultures may exhibit varying levels of emotional contagion. For instance, in collectivist cultures where emphasis is placed on group norms and social cohesion, emotional

contagion may be more prevalent compared to individualistic cultures where focus is on individual life.

These cultural differences in focus may result in varying levels of emotional contagion expression. The reasons behind emotional contagion can be attributed to different explanations. Various factors influencing emotional contagion can be categorized as unconscious or automatic factors, as well as controlled processes. Some factors leading to emotional contagion occur automatically or unconsciously, while others involve conscious control processes.

Let's explore some of these factors. Automatic processes that may contribute to why emotional contagion happens include learning, which is an outcome of childhood experiences. Emotional contagion can be viewed as a learned response, developed through repeated exposure during childhood. Consequently, when similar situations occur, we automatically exhibit learned responses. We associate certain emotions and behaviors with the emotional expressions of others, which we have learned through observation and experience.

Therefore, when others express emotions, we instinctively know how to respond. For instance, if someone expresses anger, we automatically react in certain ways because we have learned to do so over time. This process can be highly automatic. Emotional contagion can occur due to this learned behavior, ingrained in us since childhood, particularly in the context of emotional expressions. For example, we may learn to associate fear in others with subsequent frightening events.

So, they will also behave in a frightened way. We may automatically feel fear and take visual cues. Automatically, the moment we see somebody else expressing fear, we also instinctively respond with fear to mirror those emotions. It can be an automatic learned response; if another person is expressing a certain emotion, we also respond accordingly. For instance, if we have learned that others' anxiety or irritability tends to result in noisy or agitated behavior, we may find ourselves feeling similarly agitated in response. Their own anxious or irritable behaviors could also trigger a learned response in a similar way. We may learn that happiness in others is associated with kindness and generosity, leading us to feel joy when we detect happiness in others because we know that happiness may be associated with kind and generous behavior.

So, we also feel happy automatically as a learned response. Like this, a lot of emotional contagion could occur because of automatic learned responses. Another factor that can also lead to emotional contagion is called imitation. Again, it can be automatic. Emotional contagion can occur through the automatic imitation of facial expressions, postures, and vocal expressions of others, especially those in our group, leading to the activation of similar emotions in ourselves. So, we unconsciously imitate other people, especially their facial expressions, posture, and vocal expressions, particularly within the groups to which we are strongly connected.

So, that is why we imitate; whatever the other person is expressing, we also imitate the same emotions, and this is how it spreads. The act of observing a person experiencing an emotion activates similar sensory-motor states at the nervous system level; similar motor-sensory states could get activated just by observing others experiencing certain emotions. So, it kind of mirrors which are involved in producing observed emotional responses. Some neurons have also been identified as specialized nerve cells called mirror neurons.

They seem to be responsible for a lot of this automatic mimicking actions that we do. These are specialized neurons in the brain that enable individuals to automatically mimic the emotional expressions and behaviors of others. So, the moment somebody expresses certain emotions, these mirror neurons get activated and help us to mirror those emotions in ourselves as well. We will be talking more about these mirror neurons when we discuss empathy later, but this automatic mimicry system is there in our nervous system as well. So, that could also cause emotional contagion. When we observe someone else displaying a facial expression of emotion, mirror neurons fire in our brain as if we are experiencing the same emotion ourselves.

This is how we experience others' emotions. This mimicry can be unconscious and immediate, contributing to the rapid transmission of emotions. Another factor is called contention, which means when everybody is collectively paying attention to something, that can stimulate the same emotions spreading or experienced by everybody. Emotional contagion can also be caused by contention, which means synchronizing attention with others when everybody is paying attention to one thing collectively, it can lead to emotional contagion. When people attend to the same objects or events collectively, they are more likely to experience the same emotion because they spend more time focusing on something. So, the same factors, the same aspects everybody is focusing on, so emotions will also be similar because of the group setting everybody is focusing on the same thing.

So, that is causing this contention can also lead to the experience of emotional contagion. One of the studies was also done to understand this phenomenon of contention. Boothby and Clore, colleagues in 2014, where the participants tested chocolate either alone or with others. So, two conditions were there: participants were given to taste chocolate either alone or with others. In another condition without speaking to each other, they were just together but not communicating with each other. Despite this lack of communication, they enjoyed high-quality chocolate more than low-quality chocolate when sharing the experience with others compared to eating alone. So, when eating alone, there was not much difference in terms of enjoyment of high-quality chocolate as compared to low-quality chocolate.

So, this was much more pronounced when they tasted this chocolate with other people because everybody was paying attention to the same thing, and the expression of each other's kind of amplified each other's experience. So, the presence of others seems to affect the extent to which they focused on the cause of their pleasure and displeasure. If somebody is experiencing pleasure in something and everybody is focusing on that, they will also find out the cause of that pleasure collectively in a more amplified way. So, this research has shown that emotional reactions can be amplified by contention to the causes of emotions even in the absence of direct interactions or observations of each other. There can be some conscious processes in the contagion as well, emotional contagion. One is communicative imitation, and the other is unconscious imitation, which we have already discussed. One can be more conscious imitation or communicative imitation.

So, emotional contagion can also result from intentional acts. For instance, mimicry is not always an automatic response, but may sometimes be an intentional communicative act aimed at demonstrating to others that we understand how they feel and share their emotion. Sometimes, we consciously imitate others' emotions to communicate that we understand what they are feeling, or to demonstrate our empathy with their situations. This conscious imitation is done when you are feeling sad in response to the sadness of another person, to communicate

that you understand what they are going through. This is called communicative imitation, and it can be a more conscious and controlled intentional act.

So, in a relevant study in this context, participants who made eye contact with an experimenter were involved. The situation involved the experimenter dropping a TB monitor on his already injured finger. Those who made eye contact tended to mimic his pain more than those who did not make eye contact, especially individuals who made eye contact with the experimenter; they experienced more pain. This was an attempt to communicate that they understand the kind of pain he is going through. This simple experiment clearly shows that people can consciously imitate things to communicate that they understand the problems or the pain of other people.

When they made eye contact, they mimicked the pain of the experimenter more than when they did not make eye contact. This suggests that mimicry only occurs when the person expressing the emotion can see it. Thus, emotional mimicry can be the result of intentional emotional communication among individuals. Another conscious process that occurs in emotional contagion is called social comparison. We have already discussed social comparisons and the processes involved in them in earlier lectures as well, where basically we compare ourselves with others in various factors, particularly with people who are relevant to us, such as our colleagues or co-workers who are in the same social setting.

Sometimes, emotional contagion can occur due to social comparison. Psychologists have found that people tend to compare themselves with others, evaluating their abilities, opinions, and emotions in various areas. Sometimes, we engage in social comparison to understand and express emotions, among many other things like abilities and skills. When appropriate emotions are unclear, individuals in a group tend to compare themselves to each other and interpret their emotional responses as a result. Often, when unsure about what to experience or express, especially in those situations, we observe others and compare ourselves to them, thereby picking up their emotions due to social comparison.

This can also lead to conscious emotional contagion as we observe others and compare ourselves to them, especially when unsure. For instance, in one study, participants who waited for five minutes in the presence of another participant, without speaking to them, tended to emotionally converge with the other participant. This demonstrates how social comparison occurred in this context. Participants were waiting in a condition where they needed to wait for five minutes, particularly in the presence of another participant, without speaking to them. They emotionally converged with each other, primarily when the other participant was reported to be participating in the same experiment. Even without speaking to each other, they converged on the same emotional experiences when they knew that the other participant was also part of the same experiment, suggesting that they picked up emotions from each other by comparing themselves, as they understood that both were in the same context.

Another factor that can also lead to emotional contagion is empathy. Empathy essentially involves putting oneself in another person's shoes, which can lead to emotional contagion. When you put yourself in someone else's situation, you try to understand how they are experiencing it. A lot of emotional contagion can occur because of empathy alone. When individuals observe and empathize effectively, they are able to evaluate emotion-provoking situations in a similar way to the other person's experience.

The better your empathy ability, the better your ability to understand the other person's perspective. Empathy can involve both conscious and unconscious processes. Sometimes, unconsciously, one can understand the perspective of another person. Empathy can involve a very conscious process where you analyze the situation of another person consciously and then understand and pick the emotions to express accordingly, operating on multiple levels of awareness. Different aspects of empathy can occur automatically and without conscious effort, while others may require deliberate cognitive processing. More complex forms of cognitive empathy, such as perspective-taking, involve consciously thinking about their perspective, requiring more conscious effort. Understanding another person's emotions from their point of view also requires conscious cognitive effort.

So empathy could also be another reason for emotional contagion. Based on our current understanding, it is reasonable to assume that both automatic and controlled processes can play a role in emotional contagion. It is clear that in emotional contagion, sometimes it can happen very unconsciously, and it can also happen because of consciously thinking about a situation and picking things consciously from the other members of the group.

A very simple example here is that one can automatically mimic someone's smile very unconsciously and also intentionally enhance the facial expression to show that you acknowledge and appreciate the smile. When somebody smiles, you may smile automatically, but also then consciously, which is unconscious and more consciously, you can add to the impact of that by kind of facially expressing more elaborately to acknowledge and appreciate to express that you acknowledge and appreciate their smile.

So, both conscious factors as well as unconscious factors could be collected together in the same example. Sometimes also, people deliberately conceal their smile if the situation calls for a negative or neutral emotional response. In every situation, sometimes some aspects could be unconscious, some aspect could be conscious. These are some of the things about group emotions, and the major fundamental aspects of group emotion is emotional contagion, why people experience group emotion and the factors, reasons, or the causes behind emotional contagion. These are some of the important aspects.

So, in the next class, we will be talking about how we experience emotions on behalf of some groups. With this, I will stop here. Thank you.