“Will I be judged harshly after trying to help but causing more troubles?” A misprediction about help recipients

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Research Question

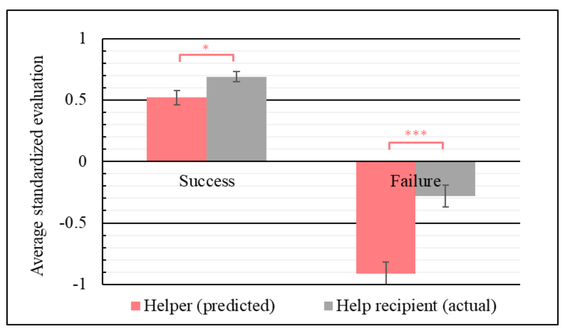
- In many cases, people intend to offer help but unfortunately cause more troubles to help recipients. After doing so, helpers often expect negative evaluations from help recipients.
- Is this prediction accurate?

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis

- Intending to offer help but causing more troubles to help recipients reflects helpers’ high warmth but low competence.
- Competence dominates self-perception, while warmth dominates person/other-perception (Fiske et al., 2007; Wojciszke, 1994).
- People use their own mental states to infer the thoughts and feelings of others (Krueger & Clement, 1994; Tamir & Mitchell, 2013).
- In contrast to helpers’ predictions about help recipients, help recipients pay more attention to helpers’ warmth and less attention to helpers’ competence.
- **Hypothesis: Helpers will overestimate the negative impacts (underestimate the positive impacts) of their behaviors on help recipients when they try to help but cause more troubles.**

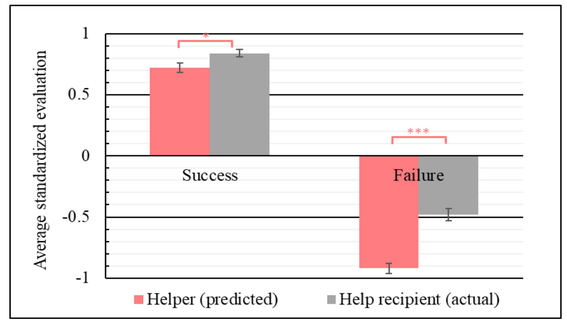
Study 1: Skating

- A 2 (outcome: success or failure) × 2 (role: helper or help recipient) between-subjects design.
- **Helper** condition: Your friend Zhang asked you to teach her to skate. You agreed. You took Zhang skating together smoothly without falling down (but you fell down, making Zhang fall down as well). **Help recipient** condition: Imagined themselves as the person being helped.
- **Helpers** predicted help recipients’ reactions on gratefulness (-7 = *to be blamed*, 7 = *to be grateful*), satisfaction (-7 = *dissatisfied*, 7 = *satisfied*), the likelihood to seek help again (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very likely*), the likelihood to recommend helpers to others (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very likely*). Help recipients rated their own reactions on these items.
- Helpers exaggerated the negative reactions of help recipients.
- The misprediction was specific to failure, ruling out alternative explanations of the spotlight effect and social desirability bias.



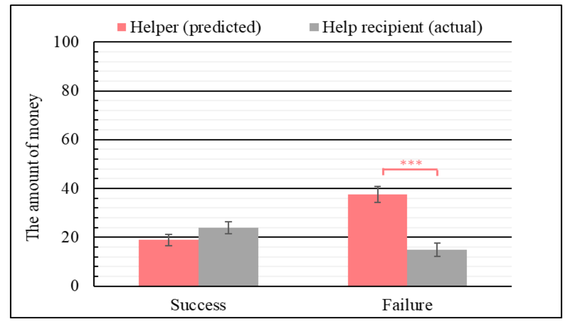
Study 2: Parking

- A 2 (outcome: success or failure) × 2 (role: helper or help recipient) × 2 (Type: proactive or reactive help) between-subjects design.
- **Helper** condition: Seeing Wang having trouble parking, you offered to help (Wang had trouble parking, so she asked you for help). You helped Wang park her car without any scratch (but it was scratched). **Help recipient** condition: Imagined themselves as the person being helped.
- **Helpers** predicted help recipients’ reactions (e.g., gratefulness). **Help recipients** rated their own reactions.



Study 3: Serving

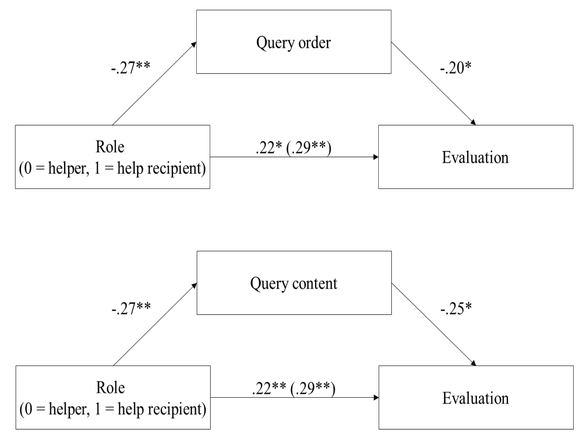
- A 2 (outcome: success or failure) × 2 (role: helper or help recipient) between-subjects design.
- **Helper** condition: Imagine that you often go to a restaurant. The restaurant owner was busy today and wanted you to help serve food to other guests. You said yes, and served the dish to the guest (but you knocked over the plate). **Help recipient** condition: Imagined themselves as the restaurant owner being helped.
- **Helpers** predicted how much discount the restaurant owner would give them if their bill was ¥100 (how much the restaurant owner would ask them to pay if they caused a loss of ¥100). **Help recipients** rated their own reactions.



Study 4: Luggage

- A 2 (role: helper or help recipient) between-subjects design.
- **Helper** condition: Imagine that your friend Sun asked you to help her with her luggage. You helped her, but broke the luggage by accident. **Help recipient** condition: Imagined themselves as the person being helped.
- Each participant listed three to six real-time thoughts. Then, **helpers** predicted help recipients’ reactions (e.g., gratefulness). **Help recipients** rated their own reactions.
- Index of query order = $\frac{2 \times (MR_{\text{warmth}} - MR_{\text{competence}})}{n}$

  Index of query content = $\frac{n_{\text{competence}} - n_{\text{warmth}}}{n_{\text{competence}} + n_{\text{warmth}}}$
- A higher query order (content) reflects earlier (more) thoughts about competence (vs. warmth).
- Helpers (M = -0.24) exaggerated the negative reactions of help recipients (M = 0.23), $F(1, 121) = 11.37$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$.



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