

Bystanders' Behavior during Emergencies

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Abstract : The behavior of bystanders in emergencies and disasters have been examined for over 50 years. Such acts have been cited as contributing to saving lives in terms of providing first responder help until official emergency units can arrive. Several reasons have been suggested for this type of behavior but most focused on a broad segment of individual psychological decision-making processes. Recent theoretical evidence suggests that the external factors for such bystander decisions, mainly disaster community based social contexts factors, are also important. We aim to test these competing arguments. Specifically, we examine alternative explanatory perspectives by focusing on self-efficacy as a proxy for the accepted individual psychological case and contrast it with potential bystander characteristics of the individual as well factors as embedded in the social context of the disaster community. To do so, we will utilize a random sampling of the population from a field study of an urban community in Israel that experienced five years of continuous terror attacks. The results strongly suggest that self-efficacy, as well as external factors: preparedness and having skills for intervention during emergencies along with gender best, predict potential helping behaviors. These results broaden our view of bystander behavior and open a window for enhancing this phenomenon as another element in disaster and crisis management.

Keywords : bystander behavior, disasters emergencies, psychological motivation to help, social context for helping

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