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심리학 석사 학위논문

The Effect of Prior Experiences on Advice for Others in Distress

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정서적 고민에 대한 조언에 미치는 영향

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Abstract

The effect of ‘similar experience’ has been studied on many dimensions from empathy to social support. Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to whether and how prior similar experiences affect the specific way people give advice about affective concerns. Across four studies, I found that the “experienced” who had a similar experience were believed to and actually did give more helpful advice, with unique words of advice compared to the “inexperienced.” Specifically, Study 1 showed that people believed that the experienced would give better advice about their hardship. Lay belief was confirmed by the results of Study 2, where actual pieces of advice about post-breakup distress from the experienced (vs. the inexperienced) were evaluated as more helpful and empathetic. Further, Study 3 revealed that the gap in the evaluation originated primarily from the quality of the content rather than from the information that the advisor had a similar experience or not per se. Lastly, the results of content analysis in Study 4 showed that the advice from the experienced had more features of supportive messages and more words associated with cognitive reappraisal.

Keyword : similar experience, advice, social support, empathy

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Introduction

When we decide which laptop to buy or a career to invest in, we seek advice of those who have done it, who are expected to have more useful information obtained from their own trial and error. As to practical concerns, the “experienced” usually know better and thus help more (Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006; French, Raven, & Cartwright, 1959; Jungermann, Fischer, Betsch, & Haberstroh, 2005; Schrah, Dalal, & Snizek, 2006; Snizek, Schrah, & Dalal, 2004). Would it be the case also for affective concerns?

We seek advice about affective issues mostly when we cannot find an exit by ourselves, which is quite frustrating. On a support giver’s end, advice is one of the most common social support strategies as well as one of the most difficult strategies to succeed (MacGeorge, Feng, & Thompson, 2008). In that sense, for both advice seekers and advice givers, the question of ‘who can give better advice based on what’ need to be answered.

Different from advice about *practical* matters, advice about *affective* matters is expected to give insight and emotional comfort (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2008). Would the experienced be also better at offering insight and comfort when we suffer from distressing events such

as divorce or a breakup? This is the primary topic that I explored in the present research.

A plethora of research has examined whether and how shared experiences of affective events influence empathy or perceived social support, but I am not aware of any research that has investigated them within a specific context of advice-giving.

Moreover, prior findings hardly provide consistent clues. Some research suggests that similar experiences do lead to greater social support and greater empathy (Barnett, Tetreault, & Masbad, 1987; Batson et al., 1996; Eklund, Andersson-stråberg, & Hansen, 2009; Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Preis & Kroener-Herwig, 2012; Sutor & Pillemer, 2000), while other research found that the magnitude of the effect of similar experiences differs depending on the characteristics of the problem or the context, some having even negative effects on social support or empathy. (Campbell, O'Brien, Van Boven, Schwarz, & Ubel, 2014; Davison, Pennebaker, & Dickerson, 2000; Nordgren, Banas, & MacDonald, 2011; Pillemer & Sutor, 1996; Ruttan, McDonnell, & Nordgren, 2015; Wallace & Jovanovic, 2011)

To elaborate on the variance of the effect of similar experiences, Davison et al. (2000) showed that patients' perceived support from a support group differed depending on the level of social burden of their disease,

similar to the findings by Pillemer and Suito (1996), where caregivers perceived those who had similar experiences as more helpful when caregiving was more distressful. As an example of demonstrating the negative effect of similar experience on empathy, Ruttan et al. (2015) showed that those who had endured bullying were more likely to underestimate the social pain of the bullied adolescents and, thus, be more harsh to those who failed in enduring the pain.

Varying findings on social support might result from various real life elements, since social support is a comprehensive perception on lasting relationships and life circumstances. Accordingly, in order to examine the effect of similar experiences on social support, we would need to first identify and control other confounding real life factors, which is not easy. In contrast, prior research on empathy tended to focus on the inner mind of an empathizer, rather than examine the working of empathy within the context of interpersonal interaction. Therefore, with existing research on social support and empathy, we cannot conclude on whether the experienced would give a better advice about affective concerns.

Provided that, the current research directly focuses on one specific form of interpersonal interaction, giving and taking advice about affective concerns. Advice about psychological hardship needs to be distinguished from other means of social support such as empathizing or consolation since

it requires ‘insights’ as advice (MacGeorge et al., 2008). Also, it differs from informative advice as it is regarded successful only when it leads to emotional comfort of a recipient (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997).

My core premise is that those who have a similar experience would offer qualified advice. I suggest that people prefer to ask advice from the experienced, who actually give more helpful advice delivering greater empathy as well as better insight. The results of four studies provide support for the uniqueness of advice from the experienced.

Social Support from the Experienced

Previous research has dealt with whether and how sharing similar experiences affects social support mostly by looking at the social networks around the people experiencing a certain hardship in their life. Since the focus was on one’s network, not specific behaviors, interactions, or situations, this approach naturally had variances in behaviors and situational contexts unidentified.

Moreover, prior findings are sometimes seemingly contradicting probably due to various unidentified factors in real life, which makes it difficult to confirm the sole effect of similar experiences.

On one hand, some research has repeatedly showed that people

perceive more support from the experienced. Lehman et al. (1986) recruited the people who had lost their spouse or a child from a vehicle accident and asked them about the support they received within their social network and how helpful each support was. Based on the interview, Lehman et al. found that people perceived greater support from those who have had a similar experience (the experienced) compared to those without a similar experience (the inexperienced). Similarly, it has been reported that the experienced were less judgmental and emotionally more helpful when giving support about uneasy real-life events such as divorce (Johnson, 1988; Spanier & Thompson, 1984), unemployment (Newman, 1988), and parenting (Gottlieb & Pancer, 1988).

Longitudinal studies on social network further corroborate the benefit of a similar experience. Sutor and Pillemer (2000) tracked and interviewed those who took care of an elderly family member over four years, some of whom died during the tracking period. Through analysis of the interview about perceived social support, it was found that, particularly around the time of bereavement, people perceived significantly greater emotional support from those who had a caregiving experience than from those who did not have such experience, which was also shown regardless of the gender of the interviewees. Further, another longitudinal research demonstrated that the similarity of experience more consistently and

powerfully predicted the helpfulness of social support than the structural similarity in gender, age, and social status (Suitor, Keeton, & Pillemer, 1995). Also, Pillemer and Suitor (1996) showed that those who had the experienced in their network reported a lower level of depression, which serves as more objective evidence beyond the self-report evaluation of perceived social support.

However, it is hard to know based on these findings whether the experienced would offer better advice about the concerns of interest. The gap in social support from the experienced versus the inexperienced would have resulted from the difference in the quality of the interaction, but also from the difference in the setting and the frequency of the interactions as well as the period of acquaintance or the strength of relationship.

Besides, the significance or even the existence of the benefit of a similar experience on social support appears differently in other research.

In the research mentioned above (Pillemer & Suitor, 1996), the caregivers perceived more emotional support from the experienced in general, but the magnitude of this effect was contingent on difficulty of the caregiving situation. Also, research on social support of patients found that the degree to which patients seek those who had a similar experience depended on the characteristics of the disease they were struggling against (Davison et al., 2000). Specifically, the patients with embarrassing and

stigmatizing diseases (e.g., AIDS, alcoholism, and breast cancer) were more likely to find a support group beneficial compared to the patients with socially less burdening but physically equally painful diseases (e.g., heart disease and migraine).

Meanwhile, Wallace and Jovanovic (2011) found that sharing the same profession (lawyer) with a spouse led to the greater informative support, but, disappointingly, not to the greater emotional support.

The varying evidence suggest that we need to carefully consider the relevant factors such as the domain of the concerns (e.g., whether it is about career stress or relationship stress) or the type of relationships (e.g., spouse or support group friends) when we examine the benefit of similar experiences on social support. However, given that social support, particularly when defined as perceived availability of support, involves various real life factors hard to predict and control, it might be very costly to try to disentangle all the related factors to identify the sole effect of similar experience on social support. Therefore, we need to zoom in. Some previous research has actually focused on far more direct outcome of a similar experience, namely empathy.

Prior Experience and Empathy

Compared to social support research, empathy research has more utilized the benefit of controlled experiments and accordingly presented simpler and clearer messages, either that similar experience increase empathy or that similar experience decrease empathy under certain circumstances. However, prior research have primarily focused on the inner mind of an empathizer, rather than how the empathy is perceived by a recipient or a target.

For example, some prior work showed that those who had a similar experience felt more empathy by using a target allegedly in psychological or physical pain. Preis and Kroener-Herwig (2012) exposed participants to either pressure pain or control condition and then showed a picture of a target who was exposed to similar pain. As expected, the participants who had experienced it reported that they could understand the feeling and the perspective of the target to a greater degree than those who had not experienced it. Similarly, it was shown that people empathized more about the stories of fear of darkness, fear of being abandoned, loss of pet, and loss of a parent when they had a similar experience (Eklund et al., 2009). Consistently, the women who had a similar experience were found to be more empathic with an alleged rape victim (Barnett et al., 1987). Notably, a

gender effect was reported in a research by Batson et al. (1996), where participants observed a same-sex target enduring electric shocks or read a story of a same-sex adolescent describing an upsetting experience and only women, not men, empathized more when they had a similar experience.

In contrast, some research suggests that similar prior experience does not raise, or even decreases empathy of an observer under certain circumstances.

Nordgren et al. (2011) demonstrated that those who had a similar experience in the past but not experiencing it at the moment, just as those who had not experienced it, could not fully understand the social pain of others. Regarding such results, Nordgren et al. explained that people in a “cold” state could not empathize with visceral states of other’s psychology.

Moreover, those who had an experience of enduring bullying at school were rather less empathetic and less favorable with the adolescents who failed to endure it even than those who had no such experiences, contrary to separate observer participants’ anticipation that those who had similar experiences would be more empathetic with bullied adolescents (Ruttan et al., 2015).

In addition, repeated experiences are shown to make people insensitive to the experience, resulting in inaccurate understanding of the feeling of experiencing it for the first time (Campbell et al., 2014).

Specifically, participants who heard a joke or noise many times made poor estimations about how funny or annoying the joke or the noise would be for those who heard it for the first time, while general anticipation was that hearing the joke or the noise many times (vs. hearing them just one time) would lead to a more accurate estimation of the feeling of hearing them.

Here, one way to partly explain seemingly conflicting evidence would be to further clarify what empathy as a consequence of similar experiences is, provided that empathy consists of multiple constructs such as automatic emotional response and cognitive perspective taking (Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). Making a step forward in this sense, Hodges, Kiel, Kramer, Veach, and Villanueva (2010) identified and explored three different dimensions of empathy: empathic concern, empathic accuracy, and perceived empathy. They investigated the effect of similar experiences on each of them in a life domain of pregnancy and found that the empathizers who had a baby or who expected a baby (vs. those who had no experience of pregnancy) were more likely to think that they empathized with the targets who were pregnant, while the actual understanding of the targets did not go beyond the stereotypical supposition even for the experienced empathizers. Also, the targets' perceived empathy from the empathizers were higher for the experienced empathizers, but, interestingly, this effect disappeared when the targets' knowledge of the pregnancy experience of empathizers was

statistically controlled.

Collectively, the prior research gives us a broad hint, but not an answer to the question of whether and how the experienced would give better advice about affective concerns. Rather, the varying results of previous research suggest that the effects of similar experiences on social support or empathy cannot be generalized, but they are contingent on the contextual factors. Given that, the more we specify the context, the more accurately we would be able to predict the effect of similar experiences.

To the best of my knowledge, no research has investigated one specific form of emotional support, namely advice-giving, as an interpersonal interaction possibly affected by the advice giver's prior experiences. So, in the current research, I focused on advice-giving about affective concerns, and I hypothesized that those who have similar experiences can give better advice about affective issues with their empathic attitude and insightful approaches.

The Present Research

In the present research, I focused on the specific and distinctive aspects of the advisors who had a similar experience, in the context of advice-giving about affective concerns. First, in order to obtain a more

intuitive understanding of people's confidence in the "experienced", I compared people's preference for the experienced with their preference for other possible candidates such as a close friend or an expert as an advisor about the toughest experiences in their life (Study 1a and 1b).

Then, I questioned whether the experienced would actually give better advice that is more empathetic and helpful for relieving people's psychological distress. To find the answer to this question, I designed a study where one group of participants were asked to write a piece of advice for a person allegedly in distress after break-up from a romantic relationship. The collected pieces of advice were, in turn, rated by the other group of participants for the degree of perceived empathy and perceived psychological help (Study 2).

Next, the determinants of the evaluations were examined. Specifically, given that the experienced usually talk about their own prior experiences relevant to the target's concerns, it is possible that mere disclosure of experience affects the perception of advice. This would be the case particularly if people have a belief that the experienced would give better advice. Thus, I designed a study where I asked participants to rate a piece of advice, in which the disclosure of experience and the quality of advice were manipulated (Study 3).

Lastly, I speculated that the content of advice from the experienced

would include something unique than the advice from the inexperienced. To identify the distinctive factors in the content of advice, on one hand, I looked into it focusing on the affective features of emotionally helpful messages found by previous research. On the other hand, I explored the differences in the cognitive facets of the advice, primarily referring to the previous research on cognitive reappraisal and psychological distancing.

Across the four studies, I hypothesized that people would believe that a person who had a similar experience would give better advice even compared to their close friend, a mature person, or an expert. Also, I hypothesized that the actual advice from the experienced would be more empathetic and successful in delivering emotional support. Further, I expected that mere disclosure of experience would influence people's rating of perceived empathy possibly because people assumed that a person with a similar experience would have more empathy to the target, but mere disclosure of experience would not significantly influence the perceived emotional help, which would rather depend on the contents of the advice. Lastly, I expected that the content of advice from the experienced would contain more words associated with empathic concerns and cognitive reappraisal.

Study 1a. Lay Belief (Koreans)

I designed Study 1a and 1b to explore lay people's view of "the experienced" especially when it comes to looking for an advisor concerning psychological distress. First, I tested the hypothesis that people would prefer as an advisor a person who had a similar experience and overcame it to a person who did not, in a situation where they would ask advice about a tough life experience. Also, I investigated how important an advisor having a similar experience was in comparison to other criteria like a general relationship with an advisor or an advisor's dispositions. Lastly, I tested whether the tendency of preferring the experienced would depend on other factors such as demographics of potential recipients or the characteristics of the experience.

Method

Participants. Ninety-eight Korean students at Seoul National University (66 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.72$ years) completed an online study in exchange for Starbucks iced latte coupon worth KRW4,600.

Procedure. Participants first briefly and freely described one of the toughest hardships in their life. They next answered questions regarding the

experience they wrote about. Specifically, they reported how psychologically exhausted they were when they underwent the hardship on a 9-point scale ranging from *not exhausted at all* (1) to *extremely exhausted* (9), and how much their lives were influenced by the experience on a 9-point scale ranging from *not influenced at all* (1) to *extremely influenced* (9). Also, they answered an open-ended question as to how long ago it happened. Lastly, they assessed to what extent they agreed with the statement, “Currently, I have overcome psychological distress caused by this experience” on a 9-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (9).

Next, the main question of interest followed. They were asked to report to what extent they would want advice from eleven different types of people presented in randomized order, if they went back to the moment they were suffering from the experience they described, with a sliding bar of a 100-point scale ranging from *do not want any advice* (0) to *really want advice* (100).

The eleven advisor types presented apprised different information regarding an advisor’s similar experience or the lacking thereof, the relationship of an advisor with the participant, or the dispositional characteristics of an advisor. The specific advisor types that were presented to the participants were as below.

- (1) *A person who had a similar experience and has already overcome it*
- (2) *A person who is currently going through a similar experience*
- (3) *A person who has not had a similar experience*
- (4) *A person who is intimate with me*
- (5) *A person who knows me very well*
- (6) *A person who I like as a person*
- (7) *A person who has a similar personality and values to me*
- (8) *A person who has abundant knowledge about life*
- (9) *A person who has great empathic ability*
- (10) *A person who has great communication skills*
- (11) *A psychological counsellor*

After the preference rating of advisor types, some questions for another research were asked to participants, which will not be discussed here. In the end of the survey, participants reported their gender and age.

Results

Profile of hardships. On average, participants reported that the experience they described was quite exhausting ($M_{exhaustion} = 7.65$, $SD_{exhaustion} = 1.04$) and apparently influenced their lives ($M_{influence} = 7.20$,

$SD_{influence} = 1.64$). It happened 3.34 years ago on average, and participants seem to have somehow overcome the distress caused by the experience, albeit showing relatively large deviation ($M_{overcome} = 6.21$, $SD_{overcome} = 2.16$).

Preference of advisors. Two participants who did not complete the ratings of advisors were excluded. The ANOVA with the preference ratings of eleven advisors as the within-subject variables and gender as the between-subject variable revealed that there was a significant main effect of advisor types, $F(8.2, 772.3) = 38.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .29$ ^①, while the main effect of gender was not significant, $F(1, 94) = 0.35$, $p = .56$, $\eta^2_p = .004$. There was no interaction effect between advisor types and gender, $F(8.2, 772.3) = 0.93$, $p = .50$, $\eta^2_p = .01$.

As expected, contrasts revealed that ratings of “a person who had a similar experience and has already overcome it” ($M = 79.21$, $SD = 21.53$) were significantly higher than ratings of “a person who is currently going through a similar experience” ($M = 55.95$, $SD = 29.79$), $F(1, 94) = 44.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .32$, as well as “a person who has not had a similar experience” ($M = 13.90$, $SD = 18.82$), $F(1, 94) = 381.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .80$. Moreover, “a person who had a similar experience and has already overcome it” was the highest-rated advisor, which was rated significantly higher than “a

^① Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2(54) = 96.95$, $p < .001$, thus degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = .82$)

person who knows me very well”, the second highest-rated advisor ($M = 62.39$, $SD = 28.53$), $F(1, 94) = 21.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .18$ (see Figure 1 for ratings of all advisor types).

In order to examine whether the extent to which people prefer an experienced advisor be different depending on demographics of people or the intensity of hardships, I calculated the “marginal preference for the experienced” by deducting the ratings of “a person who has not had a similar experience” from the ratings of “a person who had a similar experience and has already overcome it” and regressed it on gender, age, and four hardship profiles measured in this study in six separate regression models as well as altogether in one multiple regression model. In either way, all the demographics and hardship profiles measured did not significantly predict the marginal preference for the experienced (*ns*).

Discussion

Consistent with my prediction, the results of Study 1a indicated that participants preferred the experienced to the inexperienced when they look for an advisor for their toughest hardships. Interestingly, they preferred one who had a similar experience even more than one who knows them well or one who had abundant life experiences. Also, there was no evidence that this

tendency depended on the advice seekers' gender or age, or the characteristics of the hardship for which they sought advice.

However, people's confidence in the experienced found in Study 1a might seem too apparent, particularly considering the negative effects of similar experience on empathy demonstrated in the previous research (Campbell et al., 2014; Ruttan et al., 2015). One possible alternative account is that the results of Study 1a might be limited to the specific participant pool. The participants of Study 1a were young adults, who are more likely to be open to others (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990; McCrae et al., 1999) and have less elaborated thoughts about changes in life (Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989) compared to the older adults. These characteristics of young adults might have led to prompt confidence in the experienced. In addition, cultural factors could have played a role, provided that Asians are more inclined to find themselves connected with others in harmony, while Americans seek to maintain their own uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). To rule out those alternative explanations, I ran the same study for American adults with a wider range of age in Study 1b.

Study 1b. Lay Belief (Americans)

The purpose of Experience 1b was to replicate the results of Study 1a for a different pool of participants. The participants in Study 1b were American adults with different cultural background and a wider range of age comparing to the participants of Study 1a. I hypothesized that the American adults would also prefer the most the experienced and demographics of advice seekers and characteristics of concerned experiences would not significantly affect this preference.

Method

Participants. Eighty-one US citizens (47 females; $M_{age} = 36.99$ year; White 73.2%, African American 9.8%, Asian 7.3%, Native American 4.9%, Hispanic 3.7%, others 1.2%) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk to complete an online study in exchange for \$0.50.

Procedure. The experimental procedure was identical with Study 1a except for the language used and the absence of the questions for irrelevant research. The original Korean questionnaire used in Study 1a was translated into English by a bilingual translator and no discrepancies were found in the back-translation by another translator.

Results

Profile of hardships. Participants in Study 1b reported that the hardship they described was very exhausting ($M_{US, exhaustion} = 8.33$, $SD_{US, exhaustion} = 0.96$), which was significantly higher than university students in Korea ($M_{KOR, exhaustion} = 7.65$, $SD_{KOR, exhaustion} = 1.04$), $t(177) = -4.52$, $p < .001$. Also, American adults reported that their hardship influenced their lives ($M_{US, influence} = 7.89$, $SD_{US, influence} = 1.35$) to a greater extent than Korean students did ($M_{KOR, influence} = 7.20$, $SD_{KOR, influence} = 1.64$), $t(177) = -3.01$, $p < .01$. The experience occurred 7.29 years ago on average, further than 3.34 years ago of Korean students, $t(177) = -4.56$, $p < .001$. However, the extent to which participants reported to have overcome the distress caused by the hardship ($M_{US, overcome} = 6.52$, $SD_{US, overcome} = 2.07$) was not significantly different from Korean students ($M_{KOR, overcome} = 6.21$, $SD_{KOR, overcome} = 2.16$), $t(177) = -0.95$, $p = .34$.

Preference of advisors. Similar to Study 1a, the ANOVA with the ratings of eleven advisor types as the within-subject variables and gender as the between-subject variable revealed that there was a significant main effect of the advisor types, $F(7.6, 598.8) = 31.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .29$ ^②. Yet, gender effect was somehow different from the results of Study 1a. The main

^② Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi^2(54) = 138.57$, $p < .001$, thus degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = .76$)

effect of gender was marginally significant, $F(1, 79) = 3.11, p = .08, \eta^2_p = .04$, and there was an interaction effect between the advisor types and gender, $F(7.6, 598.8) = 2.28, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .03$. However, no interaction effect was found significant in any planned contrast comparing preference for “a person who had a similar experience and has already overcome it” with preference for other type of an advisor.

Importantly, consistent with Study 1a, contrasts showed that ratings of a person who experienced and overcame it ($M = 80.99, SD = 25.32$) were significantly higher than ratings of a person who is currently experiencing it ($M = 69.77, SD = 28.03$), $F(1, 79) = 19.60, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .20$, or than ratings of a person without the experience ($M = 23.06, SD = 28.70$), $F(1, 79) = 181.05, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .70$. Similar to the results of Study 1a, a person who experienced and overcame it was at the top of preference ratings, and the second highest-rated was a person who knew them very well. The difference in ratings between the highest and the second highest ($M = 74.33, SD = 23.89$) was significant, $F(1, 79) = 5.74, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .07$ (see Figure 1 for ratings of all advisor types).

Also, regression analysis revealed that the coefficients of gender, age, and four hardship profiles predicting “marginal preference for the experienced” were not significantly different from zero either in six separate regression models or in one multiple regression model including the six

variables altogether (*ns*).

Lastly, there were no significant cultural differences in either the absolute preference for the experienced, $t(177) = -0.48, p = .63$, or in the marginal preference for the experienced, $t(150.2) = 1.47, p = .14$.



Figure 1. Study 1: Preference of eleven advisor types in three dimensions. Ranking is based on the average preference ratings of Koreans and Americans.

Discussion

The results of Study 1a and Study 1b consistently showed people's confidence in the experienced. Participants strongly believed that a person who had a similar experience would give better advice for psychologically difficult matters. They responded that they wanted to ask advice from a person who had similar experiences even more than a person who knew them well and who had abundant knowledge about life. Further, this tendency was surprisingly consistent across participants' demographics and cultural backgrounds as well as across the features of the hardships.

To the best of my knowledge, no research has directly examined a general lay belief about the experienced. The previous research rather assumed that the experienced are believed to be more empathetic and understanding, calling it 'common sense' (Ruttan et al., 2015). The results of Study 1a and 1b would provide firm grounds for naming it 'common sense' by not only demonstrating the existence of the lay people's confidence in the experienced, but also showing the relative significance of it.

Given strong and consistent preference for the experienced found in Study 1a and Study 1b, the following question would be whether a person with a similar experience really gives better advice as people believe. Study 2 was conducted to answer this question.

Study 2. Actual Evaluation

I predicted that advice from the experienced is substantially better than advice from the inexperienced. What is “better” advice? Empathy can be one answer provided that people perceive emotional support from other’s empathic messages (Greene & Burleson, 2003). However, advice is different from just sharing one’s pain in that it is directly asking for a way out of a difficulty (MacGeorge et al., 2008). When people are suffering from psychological pain and ask for advice, what they ultimately expect might be something that actually helps to relieve their emotional pain. In this sense, I assumed that good advice for a psychological difficulty is one that helps to resolve psychological distress and thus I set “perceived psychological help” as a focal dependent variable. Also, to replicate previous research, I included perceived empathy as the other dependent variable.

The main independent variable was whether an advisor had a similar experience, but advice of what issues should be compared? If the issue is so unique that people who have not experienced it could never know what it is like, the possibility for them to give good advice would be low. To be conservative about the results, I ran a pilot study and chose the most common hardship of university students, the population from which I drew

participant in further studies.

Pilot Study

Sixty-seven students at Seoul National University were asked to list the three toughest experiences in their life in an online study. The domains of 201 descriptions of hardships collected were roughly divided into five categories: relationship (38%), achievement (32%), health (13%), financial issues (6%), and others (10%). Importantly, the most frequently listed experience was a breakup with a romantic partner, which was mentioned at least once by 37% of the participants, the largest portion of any single issue. On the grounds that more than one third of the participants had psychologically suffered from a breakup, I assumed that a breakup served as one of the most common distressful experiences that an ordinary university student might have understanding of.

Method

Overall Procedure and Participants. The study consisted of two phases: advice-writing phase and advice-evaluating phase. In the advice-writing phase, participants wrote their words of advice to a person who was purportedly suffering from a breakup. In the advice-evaluating phase,

different participants evaluated these pieces of advice collected in the advice-writing phase. Participants were recruited separately for each phase. Sixty-seven students at Seoul National University (41 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.64$ years) participated in the advice-giving phase and two hundred and seventy students at Seoul National University (160 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.33$ years) participated in the advice-evaluating phase. Studies were conducted online and participants received Starbucks iced latte coupon worth KRW4,600.

Advice-Writing Procedure. Participants first read a post-breakup story of an ostensible writer (“target”) who was purportedly suffering from and agonizing over the emotions that hit him/her after a break-up. The story is presented below.

I know even divorces happen all around these days. I thought our relationship would last forever, though. We used to say that our love would be forever and we would be each other's last love. But now that we are apart, I feel really empty. The time we had together, our promises, and our memories... Thinking that they are all gone and will never come back makes me miss them even more. My ex was a really huge part of my life, but now we are nobody to each other and it is even awkward to talk to each other. It feels like everything happened in a flash. Yesterday, as I tidied up my room, I stumbled across a picture of us and I suddenly broke down crying. I don't want anyone to know about me doing this, but I'm so sad and lonely. I

cannot focus on my work, and cry out of nowhere. I don't know if it is so painful just because it is the first time for me to break up. What should I do? Is it obvious that I hurt so much because I just broke up? Sometimes I just want to disappear. I'm afraid that it will never end and keep haunting me over and over. Should I contact my ex again?

On the next page, participants were asked to report if they had a similar experience to the target, and if so, how much similar their experience was to the target on a 7-point scale ranging from *not similar at all* (1) to *extremely similar* (7). Participants next wrote their piece of advice for the target without any constraints of the length or format.

A total of thirty-seven participants' advice were used in the next advice-evaluating phase: twenty-three pieces from participants without a similar experience, and fourteen pieces from participants with a similar experience of which the similarity score was over or equal to six. I excluded advice from the participants who reported the similarity score under six so as to distinguish clearly between the experienced and the inexperienced. Since the level of similarity is not discrete but is along a continuum, not-so-similar experience might result in confounding factors.

Advice-Evaluating Procedure. Participants read the same story as used in the advice-writing phase and also reported if they had a similar experience. Next, they were randomly assigned to evaluate advice from the

experienced or advice from the inexperienced. To balance the number of pieces of advice that participants evaluated, I split twenty-three pieces of advice from the inexperienced into two groups, resulting in a total of three conditions. In each condition, representatively fourteen, eleven, or twelve pieces of advice were presented to the participants one by one, each followed by two evaluation questions: “*To what extent do you think this advice will be psychologically helpful for the target?*” and “*To what extent do you think this advisor empathizes with the target?*”. The evaluation questions were answered on a 7-point scale, ranging from *not at all* (1) to *very much* (7).

Results

The purpose of this study was primarily to test whether the advice from the experienced is psychologically more helpful and more empathetic.

However, before examining the main question, it was needed to ensure that a general third person’s rating would be a reasonable proxy of how an intended recipient of advice would feel. Notably, some of the raters in this study had not even experienced a breakup in their life. If these raters, the opposite of intended recipients in a sense, appreciated advice not differently from those who had experienced it, it could be assumed that

there existed a consensus in evaluating advice regardless of the degree of similarity to an intended recipient, providing grounds to use general people's ratings as a proxy of intended recipients' ratings. Also, I considered the rater's gender as a control factor.

Putting the factors altogether, I conducted a $2 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed design ANOVA, with the ratings (psychological help vs empathy) as the within-subject factors and the advice condition (advice from the experienced vs. advice from the inexperienced A vs. advice from the inexperienced B), the rater's experience (experienced vs. inexperienced), and the rater's gender as the between-subject factors. First of all, the results revealed that there was a main effect of the ratings, $F(1, 258) = 5.03, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .02$, implying that perceived psychological help and perceived empathy are distinguishable from each other. Also, there was an interaction effect of the advice condition and the ratings, $F(1, 258) = 29.30, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .19$. No other interaction effects were significant, all $ps > .11$. Notably, there were no significant interactions involving the raters' experience or the raters' gender, thus I collapsed across the rater's experience and gender for the remainder of the analyses.

To further look at the patterns of the interaction effect, I ran a one-way ANOVA and a planned contrast for the psychological help rating and the empathy rating separately.

As expected, on psychological help, the results of ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of advice condition, $F(2, 267) = 3.57, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .03$. A planned contrast revealed that a group of advice from the experienced ($M = 4.14, SD = 0.65$) were evaluated as psychologically more helpful than the other two groups of advice from the inexperienced ($M = 3.92, SD = 0.67; M_A = 3.90, SD_A = 0.65; M_B = 3.93, SD_B = 0.69$), $F(1, 267) = 7.10, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .03$.

Similarly, on empathy, the results showed a significant main effect of the advice condition, $F(2, 267) = 19.98, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .13$. A planned contrast showed that a group of advice from the experienced ($M = 4.27, SD = 0.69$) was evaluated as more empathic than other two groups of advice from the inexperienced ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.76; M_A = 3.90, SD_A = 0.74; M_B = 3.60, SD_B = 0.74$), $F(1, 267) = 32.10, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .11$.

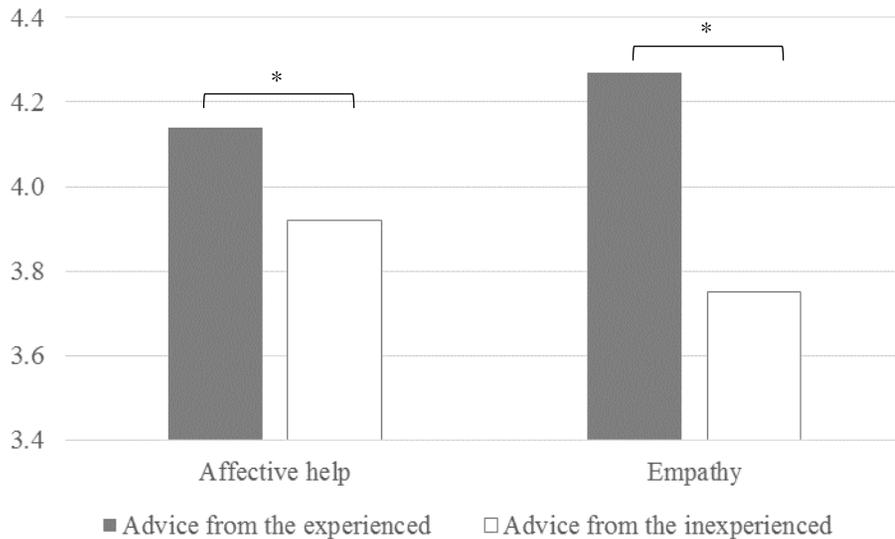


Figure 2. Study2: Evaluation of psychological help and empathy were significantly higher for a group of advice from the experienced compared to the other two groups of advice from the inexperienced

Discussion

The results of Study 2 showed that the experienced actually deserves people's trust. The advice from the experienced was rated to be more helpful as well as more empathic, regardless of the raters' experience or gender. The effect size might seem low, but it should be interpreted in the context that the evaluation was on written advice varying in the content as well as writing style. It might be rather surprising that the effect of whether an advisor had a similar experience survived such broad variety of determinants to significantly explain the variance of the evaluations.

As a next step, specifically what in the advice from the experienced come across as more helpful and empathic needs to be further investigated. I speculated that the affectively and cognitively unique perspectives of the experienced would contribute to the evaluation, so I explored the content of advice focusing on those features in Study 4.

Meanwhile, knowledge of an advisor's similar experience per se could have affected the evaluations. The experienced are likely to mention that they have similar experiences to the target in their advice, which might automatically increase credibility of the advice if a rater has a belief that the experienced would give better advice as shown in Study 1. To clarify this, I designed Study 3.

Study 3. Determinants of Evaluations

In Study 2, the advice from the experienced scored higher in both psychological help and empathy. It can be questioned whether just referring to “I’ve been there, too” somewhere in the advice would have contributed to this gap in evaluation. Earlier research showed that difference in perceived empathy between the experienced and the inexperienced disappeared when statistically controlling the disclosure of experience (Hodges et al., 2010). To examine whether mere disclosure of an advisor’s experience as well as the substantive content of advice had impacts on the evaluation of perceived empathy and perceived psychological help, I conducted a more controlled study where disclosure of an advisor’s experience and the quality of content were manipulated.

Method

Participants. One hundred and sixty-six Korean student participants at Seoul National University (87 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.76$ years) participated in an online study in exchange for a drink coupon worth KRW1,900.

Procedure. Participants read a post-breakup story, which was mostly based on the original version used in Study 2, but reflected a bit of touch to

accentuate the writer's agony. Participants next read a piece of advice randomly assigned from six combinations of 2 content condition (good content vs. mediocre content) × 3 disclosure condition (no disclosure vs. disclosure of experience vs. disclosure of inexperience).

The content condition determined the base content of the advice to be presented. I screened the pieces of advice collected in Study 2 to select the base content. I considered only the inexperienced participants' advice that did not refer to or allude to the advisor's experience or inexperience, because whether the information of an advisor's experience was disclosed should be controlled and manipulated only by the disclosure condition, not by the base content.

For "Good content" condition, I selected the advice with the highest evaluation (5.1 in a 7-point scale) of psychological help among valid candidate pieces of advice. For "Mediocre content" condition, I chose the advice with an evaluation of psychological help close to average advice from the inexperienced (3.9). I did not use "bad" content in order to avoid a floor effect, because the worst advice was rated as low as 1.8, having little room to get lower.

Within the base advice according to the content condition as above, a few phrases were inserted or not depending on the Disclosure condition. For the "No Disclosure" condition, I used the advice content as it is without

adding a phrase. For the “Disclosure of Experience” condition, I embedded a sentence “*I’ve been there, too*” at the beginning of the advice, and “*I felt just like you after I broke up*” in the middle of the advice. For “Disclosure of Inexperience”, I inserted “*I’ve never been there, but*” at the beginning and “*I’ve never experienced it, but I think I might understand how you feel.*” in the middle. For example, the combination of “Good Content” and “Disclosure of Experience” is presented below (no bold in actual reading).

***I’ve been there, too.** A breakup doesn’t make all the moments you had meaningless. If you didn’t meet your ex, there would’ve been no memories, and no grow-ups. I hope you don’t deny your past only because you are in pain now. It is just natural that you feel so empty and hurt. You know, the first time is the hardest. **I felt just like you after I broke up.** But, you will realize that surprisingly the pain disappears as time goes by. I hope you remember that everything passes. There is no perpetual pain, so cheer up. If you think you still cannot give up your ex or if you feel you can start over again with your ex, I guess contacting him/her again could also be good. I just want you not to get hurt doing so.*

For another example, the combination of “Mediocre Content” and “Disclosure of Inexperience” is as below.

***I’ve never been there, but** I understand you. It is mentally really painful to go through an experience where the person who used to be the*

*closest person to you suddenly become a stranger. But, to be realistic, your ex broke up with you because s/he didn't love you no more. S/he won't see you again even if you contact him/her. **I've never experienced it, but I think I might understand how you feel.** Of course you might think you are going to die and suffer from unimaginable pain, but it will be alright soon. Don't be too frustrated.*

After participants read the assigned advice, they rated empathy and psychological help of the advice, using the same questions and scales as in Study 2.

Results

A $2 \times 3 \times 2$ ANOVA with the rating (psychological help vs. empathy) as a within-subject factor and the content condition (good vs. mediocre) and the disclosure condition (no disclosure vs. disclosure of experience vs. disclosure of inexperience) as between-subject factors revealed that there is a significant main effect of the rating, $F(1, 160) = 34.77, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .18$, and a significant interaction between ratings and contents, $F(1, 160) = 5.51, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .03$, as well as between ratings and disclosure condition, $F(1, 160) = 3.70, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .04$. A three-way interaction was not statistically significant, $p > .36$.

To further interpret the interactions among ratings and other factors, I performed a 2 (content condition) \times 3 (disclosure condition) ANOVA and planned contrasts of disclosure condition for both psychological help ratings and empathy ratings. The results were as below.

Content matters. The quality of content had a main effect on both the psychological help rating, $F(1, 160) = 17.42, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .90, M_{good} = 4.17, SD_{good} = 1.46, M_{mediocre} = 3.01, SD_{mediocre} = 1.45$, and the empathy rating, $F(1, 160) = 46.43, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .96, M_{good} = 4.50, SD_{good} = 1.55, M_{mediocre} = 3.76, SD_{mediocre} = 1.59$. Content mattered regardless of disclosure of experience or inexperience, having no interaction with disclosure condition on either the psychological help rating, $F(2, 160) = 1.52, p = .22, \eta^2_p = .02$, or the empathy rating, $F(2, 160) = 0.18, p = .82, \eta^2_p < .01$.

Mere disclosure of experience increases perceived empathy. There was a marginal main effect of disclosure condition, $F(2, 160) = 11.00, p = .08, \eta^2_p = .92$. Further, a contrast revealed that participants felt the advisor was more empathic when the advisor mentioned that s/he had a similar experience ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.40$) compared to when the advisor did not give any information on his/her experience ($M = 3.87, SD = 1.78$), $F(1, 160) = 3.84, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .02$. There was no significant contrast between no disclosure and disclosure of inexperience ($M = 3.98, SD = 1.60$), $F(1, 160) = 0.19, p = .67, \eta^2_p = .001$, or between disclosure of experience and disclosure

of inexperience, $F(1, 160) = 2.47, p = .12, \eta^2_p = .02$.

But it is not that mere disclosure of experience is psychologically more helpful. The results indicated that just saying “I’ve been there, too” might not be able to comfort the distressed more than saying nothing or confessing that one had never experience it. There was no main effect of disclosure condition, $F(2, 160) = 0.06, p = .94, \eta^2_p = .06$, and each possible pair of contrast was not statistically significant; no disclosure ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.61$) vs. disclosure of experience ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.52$), $F(1, 160) = 0.003, p = .95, \eta^2_p < .001$, disclosure of experience vs. disclosure of inexperience ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.58$), $F(1, 160) = 0.12, p = .73, \eta^2_p = .001$, and no disclosure vs. disclosure of inexperience $F(1, 160) = 0.16, p = .69, \eta^2_p = .001$.

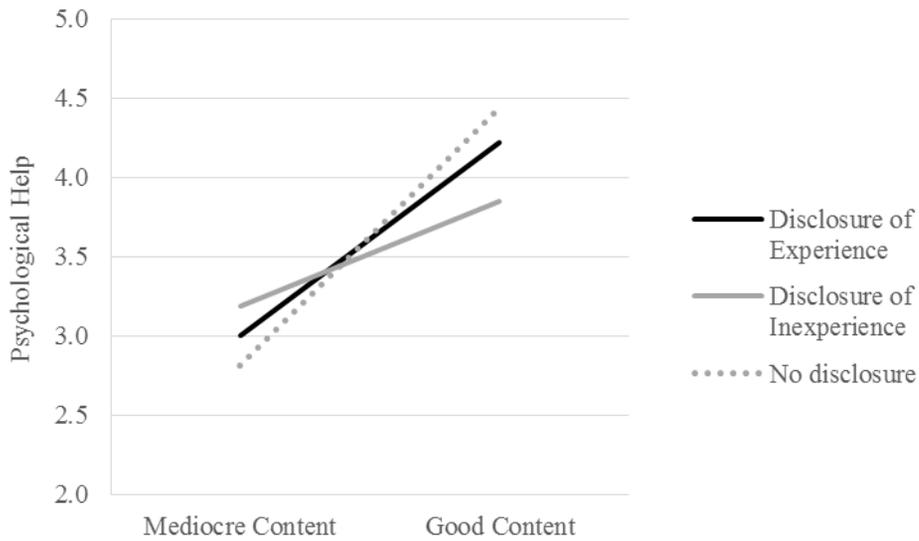


Figure 3. Study3: No main effect of disclosure condition on the psychological help rating

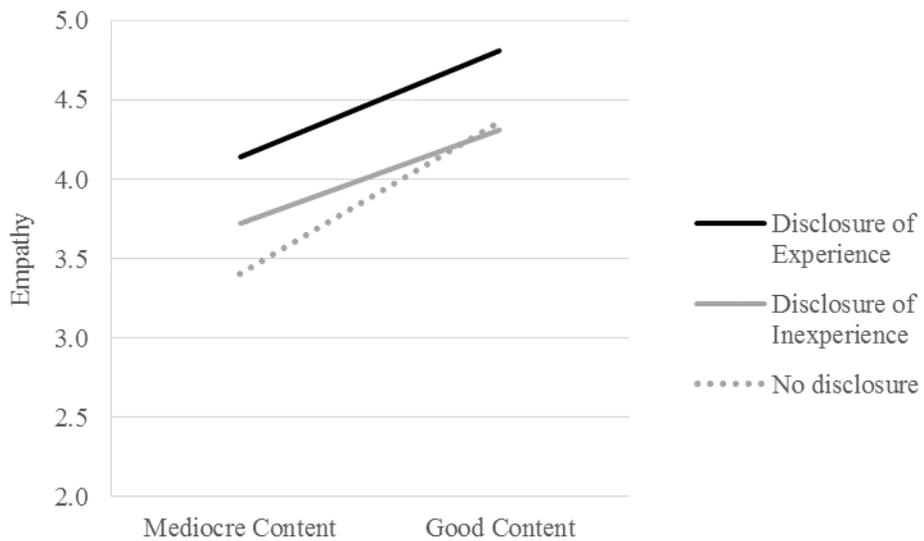


Figure 4. Study3: Main effect of disclosure condition on the perceived empathy rating

Discussion

In Study 3, perceived empathy marginally increased when advisors mentioned that they had a similar experience. This result implies that people assume that those who have a similar experience would be more empathetic to others, which might have to do with the lay belief shown in Study 1. Also, this result supports the findings from a natural setting in the existing literature (Hodges et al., 2010), with more controlled manipulation tasks.

Meanwhile, Study 3 found that perceived psychological help was not significantly influenced by mere disclosure of experience. By contrast, difference in the substantive content definitely explained the difference in perceived psychological help as well as perceived empathy, regardless of mere disclosure of experience. Provided that perceived psychological help depended primarily on the substantive content, I further explored in Study 4 how the content differed in the advice from the experienced compared to the advice from the inexperienced.

Study 4. Content Analysis

Study 3 revealed that the substantive content of advice, rather than mere disclosure of experience in advice, significantly influenced the perceived emotional support. Then, what are the distinctive factors that make the advice from the experienced seem more helpful? To answer this question, I conducted content analysis to compare the affective as well as cognitive factors in the advice between the experienced and the inexperienced. To be specific, I examined the affective aspects of the advice based on the work of Greene and Burleson (2003), which suggested as the features of emotionally helpful messages, expressing helper's favorable intent/feelings for the target, expressing understanding/acknowledging of the target's feeling/situation, and sharing relevant information with the target. On the other hand, I investigated cognitive aspects of the advice looking for the signs of cognitive reappraisal and psychological distancing. Specifically, I looked at the usages of insights words (e.g., think, accept, reflect) referring to Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) as a sign of reinterpretation of the event or related objects, the usage of adversative conjunctions (however, but, rather) as a sign of embracing contradicting or contrasting facets, and the usages of the words implying the passage of time (e.g., as time goes by, soon) as a

sign of temporal “decentering.”

Method

Participants. Two hundred and one students at Seoul National University (118 females) participated in an online study in exchange for a drink coupon worth KRW1,900.

Procedure. The advice about the post-breakup distress was collected in the same way and with the same materials as used in the advice-writing procedure in Study 2.

Results

Out of 201 participants, 89 participants reported that they did not have a similar experience, while 40 participants reported that they had a similar experience of which the similarity score was over or equal to six. The remaining 72 participants who reported the similarity score under six were excluded from the analysis to avoid confounding factors. Thus, a total of 129 pieces of advice were coded and analyzed.

Number of Words. I counted the number of words in advice using excel function^③. The result revealed that the inexperienced used 36.83

^③ =(IF(LEN(TRIM(**))=0,0,LEN(TRIM(**))-LEN(SUBSTITUTE(**," ",""))+1))

words on average, while the experienced used 58.28 words, about 22 words more than the inexperienced. This gap was statistically significant, $t(54.49) = -2.87, p < .01$. Based on this result, it can be speculated that the experienced are more willing to and eager to offer their words of advice, and also they have more contents to say.

Empathic attitude. Two coders rated (1) whether the advice shared the experience relevant to the target ($\alpha=.912$), (2) whether the advice included expression of the participant's favorable intent or worried feelings for the target ($\alpha=.891$), and (3) whether the advice expressed the participant's empathizing, understanding, or acknowledging of the target's feeling or situation ($\alpha=.838$) on a 3-point scale ranging from *not at all* (0) to *certainly* (2). In case there were discrepancy between two coders, I reconciled it. A helpfulness index was calculated by averaging three ratings. Comparing the index value between the advice from the experienced and the inexperienced, I found that the advice from the experienced included more features of helpful messages ($M = 0.70, SD = 0.63$) than the advice from the inexperienced ($M = 0.43, SD = 0.44$), $t(56.60) = -2.50, p < .05$.

Cognitive perspectives. In order to further explore cognitive aspects, I hypothesized that the experienced (vs. the inexperienced) would be more likely to include the words related to the passage of time implying temporal "decentering", adversative conjunctions showing consideration of

contradictory or contrasting facets of the related objects, and the insight words representing cognitive reinterpretation (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

Two coders rated (1) whether the advice mentioned the passage of time (e.g., as time goes by, some day) ($\alpha=.754$), (2) whether the advice include adversative conjunctions (e.g., however, but, rather) ($\alpha=.856$), (3) whether the advice had insight words (e.g., think, accept) (Tausczik & Pennabaker, 2010) ($\alpha=.763$). I intervened and reconciled the discrepancy between the two coders.

The results showed that the experienced mentioned the passage of time when giving advice ($M = 1.45, SD = 0.88$) more than the inexperienced ($M = 0.84, SD = 0.95$), $t(81.30) = -3.55, p < .01$. Accordingly, those who have a similar experience would be more likely to induce those in need to perceive emotional state as temporary rather than being stuck in the present, which has been shown to be helpful for emotion regulation as well as therapeutic change.

Also, the experienced used more adversative conjunctions ($M = 1.50, SD = 0.88$) compared to the inexperienced ($M = 1.12, SD = 0.99$), $t(83.93) = -2.17, p < .05$. This might allow for the support recipient to consider both sides of the events or the circumstances, resulting in more holistic and distanced perspectives which would eventually reduce the intense emotions.

Finally, the ratings of insight words showed that the experienced used more insight words ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.94$) than the inexperienced ($M = 0.88$, $SD = 0.96$), $t(127) = -2.46$, $p < .05$. The advisor's active reinterpretation of the events or related objects is speculated to trigger or facilitate the support recipient's cognitive reappraisal as well.

Discussion

The results of Study 4 have two important messages. First, consistent with the earlier research, the experienced showed more prosocial concerns than the inexperienced. The experienced wrote advice longer, implying that they were more willing to offer active help to the target, as well as that they had more contents to say. Moreover, they provided affectively more helpful advice by actively expressing their connectedness to the target.

The second message is that the experienced had more advantageous cognitive perspectives for emotional support than the inexperienced. The previous research has shown that cognitive reappraisal and distancing are generally helpful strategies for emotion regulation. Study 4 revealed that the experienced had more elements to lead the support recipient to such cognitive processes. They explicitly mentioned that time would go by and things would change, by which the support recipient would be able to

perceive their current pain as temporary. This type of perspectives are in line with holistic thinking and distancing which are known as helpful for coping with psychological distress. Also, the experienced was more likely to embrace the contradicting or contrasting aspects in the advice as represented by the usage of adversative conjunctions. Taking inconsistent factors into consideration can help one to step back from one's initial thoughts and re-think of the events and the related matters. Finally, the experienced was more active in cognitive reinterpretation alluded by the usage of insights words, which can also induce cognitive reappraisal on the support recipient's end.

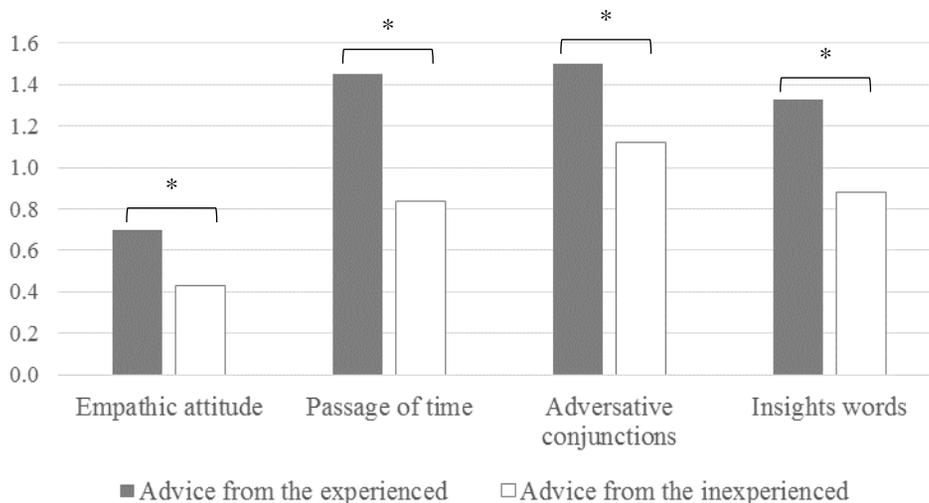


Figure 5. Study4: The experienced were more likely to express empathic attitude toward the target and use words associated with cognitive reappraisal and psychological distancing as revealed by the words related to the passage of time, adversative conjunctions, and insights words.

General Discussion

The results of the four studies revealed how the advice from the experienced is different than the advice from the inexperienced. First, I found that lay people strongly believed that the experienced would give better advice even compared to a close friend, a mature person, or an expert, which was found consistently across two different cultures and across ages (Study 1a and 1b).

This finding is the first evidence from my knowledge to focus on lay belief of a “good advisor” about affective issues. Belief provides a clue to interpreting and predicting one’s attitude, decision, and behavior (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995). Lay belief of a good advisor particularly about affective concerns can help us understand the actual ways of seeking and perceiving advice, which is a common social interaction in our daily life.

Also, this finding raises another question. What would have constructed this belief? As social network studies suggest, this belief might stem from the experiences of *receiving* satisfactory emotional support from the experienced. Meanwhile, it is also possible that the experiences of *giving* emotional support about familiar events have influenced people’s belief. People might believe that those who have a similar experience would more

empathize with them, reflecting their own experience of more empathizing with others in hardship similar to what they have experienced. This speculation may be supported by the evidences that the experienced generally reports the greater degree of empathic concerns, which is dissociable from the accuracy of empathy. Further studies would be needed to find underlying mechanism of lay belief.

Consistent with lay belief, the advice from the experienced was rated as more empathic and psychologically more helpful (Study 2). This evidence was obtained from a study controlling the variables such as the relationship between a support giver and a support recipient (no acquaintance), a concerning issue (break-up), and the avenue of emotional support (writing), which makes this study distinguishable from the previous research on social support of the experienced. Focusing on the specific context of advice-giving could lead to clarifying that the experienced actually give better advice about affective concerns.

Besides, the results provide practical guidance for asking advice. According to the results, we indeed need to look for someone who have a similar experience when we feel that we cannot find an exit from distress by ourselves. The experienced would be more helpful, statistically. Further, the evaluations of 'helpfulness' seem reliable given that there was a consensus on the evaluation of advice regardless of the raters' demographics and prior

experiences.

Also, the findings in this study allow us to further investigate what makes advice from the experienced different. As one candidate determinant of the evaluation, mere knowledge of an advisor's experience influenced the perceived empathy, but not perceived psychological help (Study 3).

Whether disclosure of similar experience would affect perceived empathy has been suspected (Hodges et al., 2010), but it has not been examined in a controlled experiment to the best of my knowledge. The current study, where I directly manipulated the disclosure of experience and the quality of the content of advice, demonstrates that disclosure of experience has limited effects on the perception of advice.

The gap in the effect of knowledge of an advisor's experience on perceived empathy versus perceived psychological help suggests that people might have an intuition that empathy is not sufficient for helpful emotional support. While the present studies captured the differing working of empathy and helpfulness, the relationship between them should be further examined. Also, exploring other constructs related to psychological help beyond empathy would lead to a deeper understanding of qualified advice from the experienced.

The content analysis in Study 4 identified the distinctive empathic attitude and cognitive perspectives of the experienced, which can be one of

the factors that result in higher perceived psychological help. The experienced provided longer advice than the inexperienced, which has an implication that the experienced are more willing to provide help as well as have more experiential ingredients to offer to the target. Also, the experienced displayed their empathic attitude more obviously in the words of advice, which have been demonstrated as the features of successful emotional support in communication studies. These findings reaffirms previous evidences that the experienced show more empathic concern.

Importantly, difference in cognitive processes were also found. According to the results, the experienced were more likely to mention that time would go by, embrace contrasting or contradicting facets of the concerns, and use the words associated with insights. All the evidence seems in line with cognitive reappraisal and distancing, which are representative strategies of emotion regulation.

The present study suggests that prior experiences can influence the counterparty in communications aiming at giving/receiving emotional support not only through the affective paths but also through the cognitive paths, which has not been paid much attention compared to affective paths in emotional support. However, I did not directly deal with how the affective and cognitive characteristics of the experienced affected the evaluation of the advice. Future work is necessary to examine the effect of the affective

and cognitive uniqueness of the experienced on a recipient's perception of the concerning issues as well as the perception of the advice.

Limitations

The present studies have certain limitations. Study 2 and Study 3 had the third party evaluate the perceived empathy and perceived psychological help of advice. Although there was no effect of the rater's experience on the rating of advice in the present studies, and despite operational difficulties in a study design and recruitment, investigating the evaluation of advice by a person who actually seek advice in the middle of a tough experience would allow for more robust examination.

In addition, this research used a single issue of a break-up. Although this issue is based on the result of a pilot study which revealed that a break-up from a romantic relationship was the most common issue among the potential participants, the findings in advice about other affective issues might differ from the findings of this research. Thus, replication and further investigation using differing issues and settings will allow us to further identify the uniqueness of the experienced and the mechanism through which the uniqueness of the experienced leads to enforcing emotional support.

Conclusion

The present research showed that the experienced give better advice about affective concerns, with more empathy and insight. This research contributes to attracting attention to a specific form of social support, advice-giving, as well as lay belief about it. Further, the current studies identify what makes the advice from the experienced distinguishable. It also has practical implications for advice seekers having affective concerns. The experienced are worth seeking out.

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국문 초록

‘유사한 경험’의 효과는 공감, 사회적 지지 등 다양한 영역에서 연구되어 왔다. 하지만, ‘유사한 경험’이 정서적인 경험에 대한 조언에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지에 대해서는 직접적으로 밝혀진 바가 없다. 본 연구에서는, 일반인들이 정서적인 문제에 대해 고민할 때 유사한 경험이 있는 조언자를 선호하며, 실제로도 경험자가 더 도움이 되는 조언을 제공함을 확인하였다. 구체적으로, 연구 1의 결과에 따르면, 사람들은 힘든 일이 있을 때 친한 친구나 상담가보다도 비슷한 경험이 있는 사람을 조언자로서 더 선호하는 것으로 나타났다. 연구 2에서는 피험자들로 하여금 이별 후 고민에 대해 조언을 작성하게 하였는데, 이때 경험자의 조언이 정서적으로 더 도움이 되고, 공감이 느껴지는 것으로 나타났다. 연구 3에서는, 이러한 평가가 단순히 조언 내용에 노출된 조언자의 경험 여부에 대한 정보 때문이 아니라, 조언의 실질적인 내용의 차이에 기인함을 밝혀내었다. 연구 4의 결과에 따르면, 경험자들의 조언은 감정적 지지를 전달하는 메시지의 특징을 잘 담고 있고, 인지적 재평가와 연관된 단어들을 더 사용하는 것으로 나타났다.

주요어 : 유사한 경험, 조언, 사회적 지지, 공감

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