

Over time, many psychological studies have taken place, some of which have resulted in the investigation of various ethical issues. Milgram's 1963 obedience experiment is certainly one criticised by psychologists such as Baumrind.

In 1963 Milgram advertised for people to join his "study of the memory" through the local press. Milgram informed paired participants that one would be a student, and the other would take on a teacher role. The student, who was actually an actor, was put into a small room, where he had to answer questions. If the student provided the wrong answer to the question they were given an electric shock, each wrong answer would see an increase in electrical current and more violent shocks, at one point the student would complain repeatedly of heart palpitations. Whenever the participant playing the role of the teacher said they did not want to carry on with the experiment, the person in authority told them they had no choice but to proceed. The majority of teachers continued to question and shock their students, and completed the experiment despite cries for mercy and screams of pain.

Upon completion of the experiment the teacher was reunited with the student once more, the situation became apparent that, they had in fact been fooled into thinking this was a live study, but in reality no one had been electrocuted and the distress was a just a charade. The participating teachers had been deceived and gave no informed consent. Milgram concluded, obedience is a consequence of social pressure rather than a personality defect.

This study can be analysed by looking more closely at the costs and benefits to the individuals that participated, costs can be defined as negative impact and benefits as positive impact.

In 1964 Baumrind severely criticised Milgram's study. Her concern was that the participants didn't give informed consent, which may lead to harmful effects to them in the future. Milgram refused to accept this and responded stating that, at no time were any of the participants forced to obey, there were chances for them to disobey throughout the experiment which few of them did.

She argued that participants suffered personal distress and psychological harm, from being deceived resulting in low levels of esteem, to this Milgram argued that the outcome of the study could never have been predicted and stress levels within

candidates were never sufficient enough to stop the experiment. Baumrind suggested long-term mental health illnesses may occur within the subjects, Milgram commissioned independent psychiatric examinations a year after the study, these concluded no signs of mental harm were apparent.

Today Milgram's study would have not been allowed due to the introduction of ethical guidelines for all psychology studies. Baumrind made valid criticisms, suggesting long-term damages to participants during her analysis of Milgram's study but he argued his case to every point made and went on to complete a follow up study where 84% of participants were glad to have taken part, and 75% felt that they learnt something of importance about themselves. I support Milgram's suggestion that if the participants felt that they came to no harm, then the experiment could only have resulted in helping society understand why people obey authority.

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Ethical Issues In Psychology

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