

Psychology Coursework-Conformity-To see how many people conform in a simple task

Abstract

My general aim is to see how many people conform in a group. When being asked simple tasks and questions. My method will be to simply approach participants one by one showing them certain results and then ask for their personal judgments. The participants will not be told the aims of the study.

Introduction

In my coursework I am going to be investigating conformity and the different studies which have been done to prove it. Conformity is a psychological term used to describe when someone changes the way they behave or think in a specific situation, concerning pressure from other group members.

E.g. when members from your own age group pressure you on making decisions or changing your behavior, this is commonly known as peer pressure. Conformity can lead to people doing or saying things they would not usually say e.g. some people are pressured into drinking, taking drugs and making negative decisions etc.

In the past many studies have been done to show the effects of conformity. The three main studies which were done were Asch study with the lines. This study was done in 1955. Asch wanted to see how other people's opinions and views affected an individual person participating in this study. In the study 7-9 college students were told to enter a classroom. They were told it was an experiment concerning psychological reasons to do with visual judgments. One factor however was that the participant didn't have any idea that the people in the groups were confederates, overall there were 123 participants. The person in charge of doing the experiment (experimenter) held up 2 cards and questioned the group which line on one card was the same as the line on the other card marked x. The confederates said their answers first and the participant answered last or next to last. The results concluded that on the trials whenever the confederate gave the correct answer 99% got the right answer as well. When they gave the wrong answer the participants (36.8% gave the wrong answer) 25% of them never once conformed so overall the study showed that a majority of them conformed.

Another study which was done to show conformity was done by Sherif in 1935. He investigated how people would change their individual view once positioned into a group situation. In this study he did not use any confederates. The experiment was simply using an illusion called the autokinetic effect. The participants entered a dark room where they could see a small dot of light above them. They were told to appraise how far the dot of light maneuvered (the light didn't move at all). An abundant amount of the participants stated the dot moved. The reason they said this was because of the autokinetic effect. The eyes retina is always active, however with nothing to focus on. So the movement of the eyes makes it look like the dot is moving. A discussion happened towards the end and after the discussion a majority of the people changed their thoughts of how much the light had moved. Their estimates changed and moved towards the group estimates.

An early psychology experiment done by Jenness in 1932. She asked students to estimate the amount of beans in a container. Once the estimates had been given they were put into groups to discuss their estimates. Afterwards they were asked to give the estimates again. She found out that their individual judgments had made others conform.

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My aim

The main aim of my experiment is to observe how many of the participants will conform the false estimate sheets and also to see the different ways they conserve. My hypothesis is that the participants, who see the higher false sheets, will conform. Also they will estimate a high digit number like the estimates on the sheet.

Hypothesis

The participants in my experiment who see the high false estimate sheet will predict a higher estimate. The participants who see the low estimate sheet will estimate a lower amount. So I my overall hypothesis is that the participants will conform with the false estimates.

Method

Design- In my study I will be using the Independent groups design and experimental method. The experimental method gives me more control of the experiment variable and any other variables. So I can say that there is a cause and effect relationship it IV and the DV. My independent variable will be whether or not the two groups of participants will either see the high false estimates or low false estimates sheet. I am using independent groups in my study because there is only one necessary condition. Either the groups see the low estimate number sheet or the high estimate number sheet. If they don't follow these conditions then the study (experiment) won't be accurate.

Participants

There will be 10 participants altogether, 5 in each group. My participants will be from my family, ranging from the age of 18-65. There will be a mixture of Males and Female participants in my group.

Materials

The only equipment I will need in my experiment is a jar with sweets and 5 sheets with the high estimates and 5 with low estimates. There will be no evidence on the sheets suggesting it is a psychological study to do with conformity.

Procedure

I will approach the participants individually so that they can't figure out what the aim of the experiment is. I will ask each participant the same thing before the experiment (see below in Appendix A). I will give the participants' 5 estimate number sheets each so they all have the same copy. The location will be in separate rooms, so they can do the experiment without figuring out conformity is involved. Each participant will only see one sheet.

Ethics

I will ask each participant whether they will participate in my experiment. If they agree I will first ask their age and record this, I will also record their gender. I will ask the participants in the first group “will you tell me how many jelly babies you think are in this jar please”. Once the first group gives all their estimates (I would have recorded the estimates). I will repeat the experiment with the second group and record their estimates. While or after the experiment I will always give participants the chance to stop the experiment if they are not happy. I will keep the participants anonymous. I will try to inform the participants as much as I can throughout the study on the other hand, I will try not to give any important information which will affect the results of my experiment. I need to ask them individually so they can't get influenced by others.

Results originally
Table of raw data

Participants	Condition A	Participants	Condition B
1	49	1	45
2	56	2	55
3	72	3	50
4	52	4	25
5	66	5	40
Mean	59	Mean	43

Results

	Mean	Median	Range
Condition A	59	56	23
Condition B	43	45	30

Conclusion of results

Overall the condition A data added up to a mean total of 59, and the condition B results added up to a total mean of 43. In my study I found out that ones who were given the low estimates conformed more than the ones who were given higher estimates. I found out that 2 people conformed from the low estimate sheets. 3 participants conformed from the high estimate sheets.

Discussion

The results showed that the participants who were given the low estimate sheets conformed more than the participants who were given the high estimate sheets. These results prove my hypothesis to be incorrect as I thought the participants who saw high estimate sheets would most likely conform. The results of this tests link with the results from Aschs study with the lines in 1955. The results from this study showed participants conformed when the other confederates and participants gave small size predictions of the lines. The result I got did contradict the line theory because my study was one sided whist Aschs study results varied.

Certain modifications could be made to the tests that I did. I could have somehow tried to make the tasks in the tests link more too everyday activities. This would have ensured I got fair yet precise results. Also I could have used more participants to get a wider view on the results and to see if it made any difference to the final conclusion. A criticism of this method could have been that the participants may have not taken this seriously and could have predicted estimates without considering the task on hand.

If the method had been changed then the results would have been a lot different. For example, lets say I told everyone together about the experiment and I asked them all their estimations. 70% more likely that there would have been more conformity.

Ways I could improve my method for further experiments could be to address the individual participants in a less tense yet openly manor. This would assure the participants that the study if nothing to worry about. So then the estimates I received would probably be more realistic.

Appendix

Document for participants under 18 to get parents to sign

Dear parent or guardian, I am conducting a psychological study for research purposes. Please will you allow your son/daughter to be a participant in this study? There is not medical restrictions and your child may leave the experiment at any time if he/she feels the need to do so.

Estimates/ top estimates are the confederates estimate shown to participant

Age	Gender	Guess
39	Male	35
39	Female	45

Age	Gender	Guess
40	Male	29
42	Female	55

Age	Gender	Guess
70	Male	43
17	Female	50

Age	Gender	Guess
56	Female	23
19	Male	25

Age	Gender	Guess
19	Male	45
21	Male	40

Age	Gender	Guess
27	Male	58
18	Male	49

Age	Gender	Guess
41	Male	60
40	Female	56

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Age	Gender	Guess
39	Female	70
41	Male	72

Age	Gender	Guess
61	Male	64
61	female	52

Age	Gender	Guess
56	Female	69
60	female	66

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References

Psychology for GCSE Level-Diana Dwyer & Craig Roberts (book)

www.psychologylevels.com/conformity (Site)

Dr Cameron (Psychology teacher)

www.bitesize.com/psychology/notes (site)

Psychology made easy-Author unknown (Book)