

# Conformity and personality traits

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



## **Abstract**

The social influences in many aspects shape a person, practice, change of beliefs or beliefs and personal judgment to issues. In a social setting, people tend to behave in a similar way; a group of people can easily influence the personality of the individual groups. Group pressure tends to take different forms from persuasion, teasing, criticism, and sometimes bullying. Psychology researchers have in many years tried to find out what exactly make people in a selected group act, behave, and share the same personality traits. The findings by the researchers have shown that personal values are created in a predictive manner by openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion and slightly of agreeableness. Gosling, et al. (2003) found the environment greatly influences the personal values of an individual while the personality trait is mostly endogenous characteristics. On this paper, a detailed look of conformity and personality trait is analyzed in details. Several hypotheses was identified in the paper highlighting the relationship and a factor that highly tries to explain and answer the questions as to why people in a group behave or portray similar personality traits. The impact of conformity and the non-conformity aspects is also discussed.

## **Introduction**

It is important to understand conformity and the personality traits in this modern world and be able to solve the many social unrests. Many of the research has mainly emphasized on understanding the process of conformity, and tend to ignore the concept of non-conformity as they try to explain the personality traits of people in the society. The one-dimensional approach has been written and explained in different literature majority of

which contrasts conformity of personality traits brought either because of independence or nonconformity. Conformity is measured regarding the extent of agreement between any given response and the normative ideal, also involving the movement conformity which is explained as a change in response brought about by the change in response due to the group pressure.

The big five traits that include; conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and extraversion have been shared in numerous trait taxonomies that have been studied and proposed. Personality traits are characteristics of individuals that tend to summarize the trans-situational consistency and their characteristic style of responding to the environment (Olver, 2003). Several evidence indicates that personality traits are endogenous tendencies related to the underlying bio-physiological response of the system.

Many researchers (e. g., Olver & Mooradian, 2003) also propose the distinction that traits are mainly biologically generated personal values are more acquired because of the difference person's environment, involving education, parental upbringing, culture, and different life events. While we understand that traits are influenced by sometimes genetics, they are somewhat influenced by culture and the environmental variables.

Several theorists have argued that certain values are associated with subjective well-being. Self-determination theorists have come up with theories that clearly indicate that conformity and personality traits are negatively associated. Although traits and values are regarded as conceptual, they are empirically related. Extraversion was related to

achievement, stimulation and value was associated with openness: Agreeableness with benevolence, while conformity associated with conscientiousness. The relationship between the conformity and personality traits has brought about two hypothesis that the research will try to answer and find out at the end. The results of the research support the first hypothesis; showing that the people who participated in the surveyed individual without group interference had a different opinion on the image. The second hypothesis that emphasized that people who are in a group would develop a similar opinion on how attractive the image appealed to them. In fact, the findings from past research indicate that people personality traits are highly influenced when in a group (Olver, 2003). The idea or opinion an individual had before the participating in the group is usually different. Many factors have been proposed to influence the personal judgment and opinion on items and people. Several scholars have tried to find out the factors that will make an individual change their initial point of view or opinion when they join in a group. According to the research conducted in the 1990s by Solomon, he conducted research involving beans in a glass, and ten people. The people were individually asked to estimate the number of beans in the glass; almost everyone had a different opinion on the exact number of beans present. The researcher went further to group them in a group where they were allowed to discuss and give their opinion on the number of beans in the glass. All the people changed their first opinion to match with that of the group.

The past research shows that the personality trait is highly influenced by conformity, people tend to behave and adopt group characteristics, and

some want to feel part of the group. This therefore explains why different people will behave similarly and develop a similar opinion on a particular subject matter. Based on the past research, it was hypothesized that opinion and judgment tend to be the same when they are in a group compared to when individually making the decision.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited in the first seminar of the second Trimester by responding to an announcement advertising the study. One hundred Deakin University undergraduate psychology students participated in the study, of which 49 were male, and 51 were female. Ages ranged from 19-41 years ( $M = 24.26$ ,  $SD = 3.52$  years). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was provided.

### **Materials**

Two target photos (one female, one male) were utilized for the current study. Both 5x7cm photos showed the target person's face from the front view, with hair included. A two-part questionnaire was compiled to measure perceived attractiveness of the target photo. Part A contained two items measured on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not attractive) to 7 (very attractive). Part B asked for the participants' gender and age. Cascade Premium full-strength beer was utilized for the study.

### **Procedure**

The respondents were randomly allocated into three groups, of which Group A was provided with one standard drink per hour, Group B was provided with

two standard drinks per hour, and Group C received unlimited water instead of alcohol. Participants took part in the study individually. Participants entered a room, viewed the relevant photo for one minute and completed both parts of the questionnaire (female participants viewed the male target photo, and male participants viewed the female target photo). They then received the allocated number of standard drinks per hour (for Groups A and B) or unlimited water (Group C) for three hours. The photo was re-presented for one minute and Part A of the questionnaire completed at the end of each of the three hours. Data were collated and analyzed by the teaching team at the conclusion of the study.

## **Results**

Of the total 88 participants, 26 conformed to the group answer in the majority of trials, while the remaining 62 did not conform at all.

To assess differences in agreeableness between the groups, measures of trait agreeableness were collated and presented in Table 1. There was a slight difference between the conforming group mean scores and the non-conforming group mean scores in agreeableness. An independent measures t-test showed that this difference between the data in Table 1 was significant, Agreeableness:  $t(127) = .91, p > .05$ . Therefore, it can be said that the result is unlikely due to chance (Luk, 1993).

Measures of conscientiousness across the conformers and non-conformers were also measured and are presented in Table 1. There was a slight difference between the conforming group mean scores and the non-conforming group mean scores, with the conformers showing slightly lower

conscientiousness levels. An independent measures t-test showed that differences in conscientiousness ratings between the two groups was statistically significant Conscientiousness:  $t(127) = .98, p > .05$ , this shows that this result is unlikely due to chance (Luk, 1993).

Measures of openness to experience for the conformers and the non-conformers were collated and are presented in Table 1. There was a difference between the conforming group mean scores and the non-conforming group mean scores, with the non-conforming group showing higher levels of openness to experience. An independent measures t-test showed that the difference in openness to experience levels between the two groups was statistically not significant, Openness to experience:  $t(127) = 1.40, p > .05$ , therefore, the result is likely due to chance (Gosling, 2003).

### **Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for Agreeableness for Conformers and Non-conformers**

#### **Conformers Non-conformers**

M SD M SD

Agreeableness 9.21 2.60 9.62 1.89

Conscientiousness 10.26 2.60 10.71 2.32

Openness to experience 10.05 2.15 10.58 1.88

#### Discussion

This study mainly aimed at finding out the relationship on how conformity and personality influences the other. Consistent with the previous studies,

personality traits, and conformity correlated positively with one another. According to the finding, it is evident that when an individual is involved in a research and asked questions, they will provide what they feel. This was observed where the students who participated in the research had differing opinions on the attractiveness. In the finding, openness was related to self-direction and correlated positively, while conformity was restrictive negatively. The emphases of personal self-direction and opinion together with universalism are reliance upon individual judgment and comfort with the different aspects. When a person is open, they have a higher need for strangeness, originality, and diversity; therefore, they will be motivated towards self-identification and universalism (Olver, 2003). The aspect of conformity is self-restrictive and submissive to a person, therefore denying an individual an opportunity to give a free-judged opinion.

Statistically, significant differences showed that people judgment and opinion tend to change once someone is involved in a group. Someone will easily conform to a group personality to feel part of the group. The agreeableness of a person greatly changes when he or she gets involved in a group decision. The results show that the rate of agreeableness is higher when the decision is made jointly compared to when they are made personally.

According to the finding, each was interviewed in a single setting. When turned to looking at the effects upon a given individual when there is a change in the situation to which they are exposed. The results are turned different, or they changed what slightly their argument to fit that of the new



conditions, indicating that personality and the five traits are highly influenced and adaptable when depending on an individual condition and state.

This study's findings support those of Olver and Mooradian, (2003). Namely, individual tend to exhibit characteristics adaptations, to that of endogenous personality traits and their external environment. People will react to their environments by displaying patterns of thoughts, behavior, and feeling, which are consistent with their personality trait. The finding also is consistent with the hypothesis that values play an important aspect in inherent personality. The trait openness to experience plays a role in shaping the individual's changes in values.

The results also support those of Solomon (1995), who found out that people will adopt the personalities traits shared in a group. A personal view and judgment are highly influenced when in a group contrary to when a person is making the judgment individually. The current study found a difference in the ratings between agreeableness and openness when both groups and individual had different views at the end. Finding shows that people will behave according to what they are exposed to, the environment and society play a role in shaping the traits and beliefs of the people. The research finding shows that conformity will in many cases change the people's belief and behavior to fit and feel part of a group. Agreement to the majority position is high when in a group compared to when there is no group. There is a strong link between conformity and personality traits since in one way or

another they are directly related. Agreeableness is has a greater strength than the other personality traits.