

Similarities and differences between concepts of compliance psychology essay



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Compliance, obedience and conformity are the three forms of social influences processes which can affect the way an individual behaviour in a social setting, all the way from following fashions and unwritten social norms, to committing immoral acts just because the individual was ordered to do so by someone with an authority position. Compliance is when an individual gave in to an expressed request from another person or other people, whereas obedience refers to doing as told by someone and as for conformity is giving in to group pressure or going along with the majority. Conformity is peer pressure, the individual was not asked to do, he just do it to go along with everyone else because the individual wants to be accepted. Obedience on the other hand comes from authoritative people such as teachers and policemen. The individual obeys the instruction that came from these authoritative figures. This paper aims to look at the similarities and differences between the concepts of the three types of social influences. And also to look specifically at those factors that will affect each of the three. In conclusion, it was found that two of the forms of social influences are very similar to each other and almost to the stage of interchangeable, while the other stands alone with influencing factors that are different from the other two.

Similarities and differences between the concepts of compliance, obedience and conformity

Introduction

Social influence is the process whereby one or more people presence, whether real or imaginary can affect thoughts, feeling and behavior of

individual under extreme or no pressure at all or even persuasion. There are three areas of social influence, namely, conformity, compliance and obedience. This purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the concepts of compliance, obedience and conformity and also to look at the factors that influence each one of them to see the differences and similarities between them. It seems that in conclusion, conformity stands apart from compliance and obedience, which share more similarities than differences.

Compliance

Compliance happened frequently in everyday life, for example, when an individual performed a task when asked to, this individual is complying with a request. The unwritten law of the group and members is to stick to the rules in order to be considered as being part of the group, this is considered the most important characteristic of compliance.

Compliance refers to a form of social influence in which an individual gave in to expressed requests from another person or other people (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011). This is also known as social compliance. There were many research carried out to find out what really influence compliance.

There are five factors or strategies that influence compliance (Jones & Pittman, 1982). One of the factors, intimidation, is to generate fear in order to let the other to think that you are dangerous. The second factor is known as exemplification, in which an individual attempt to make others to look upon him as a morally respectable person. The third factor is known as

supplication in which an individual make others believe that he is pitiful,
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helpless and needy. The fourth factor is self-promotion, in which an individual attempted to generate respect and confidence by convincing others that he is competent. Ingratiation is the last factor whereby an individual will attempt to get others to like him before subsequently making request for others to comply with him. Another strategy that increases compliance is the use of multiple requests instead of a single request. Multiple requests uses a setup or softener by first making a 'false' request and follow by the real request. There are three classic tactics, known as the foot-in-the-door, the-door-in-face and low-ball (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In accordance to foot-in-the-door tactics, an individual would most likely to agree to a larger request when an initial smaller request has been agreed. As for the-door-in-face tactics, a person would ask for a big favour at first and then followed by a smaller second favour. The low-ball tactics is based on the principle that one will agree to accept higher increase once he committed to an action. Compliance is not only influenced by persuasive tactics used as mentioned but also by the power the requester has. There are 6 basic powers, the reward power, coercive power, informational power, expert power, legitimate power and referent power (Raven, 1993). Once there is compliance, the reward power states that rewards will be given. Coercive power states that punishment will be threaten or given when there is non-compliance. The influencer will have the informational power if the targeted individuals thought that the influencer have more information than themselves. And individual process the legitimate power if the person is an authorized person from recognized organizations with the authority give commands and make decisions. Lastly, referent power refers to the attraction to or respect the influencer (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011).

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Obedience

Obedience refers to a form of social influence in which a person gave in to express instructions or orders from an authority figure without question. Or simply defined as being simply acting in accordance with rules or orders (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011). Obedience started at a very young age, for example, individual tends to obey orders or instructions coming from parents or school teachers and when the individual steps into the social to work, he tend to obey his boss. There are also others who are the followers of spiritual leaders and they sees him as a legitimate authority and will tend to obey his orders even if it is wrong. The authority that these individual have are given by the society to them. In most case, obedience is a trait that human developed out of respect or fear. Obedience is a trait that allows human beings to obey laws, belief in God, and follow social norms. Obedience is a virtue that allows schools to be great learning centre as otherwise it would be difficult for a teacher to conduct a class if some students refuse to follow or take orders from the teacher.

Experimental research into this was pioneered by the US psychologist Stanley Milgram (1963) who conducted a series of experiments, in which, 65% of the participants administered what they believed to be extremely painful and possibly deadly electric shocks to an innocent victim, who was actually a confederate, when instructed to do so by an authoritative experimenter even though many of the participants became agitated and angry at the experimenter. The level of shock that the participant was willing to deliver was used as the measure of obedience (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011).

However, some factors affecting the level of obedience had been identified by the Milgram's experiment. The of the location is one of the factors. In the experiment, when conducted at Yale University, a trusted academic institution, led to many participants to believe that the experiment would be safe and people also tend to obey others if they recognize them as ethical personality or legal authority. In this case, the experimenters were perceived as from a trusted academic institution. Obedience also increases when the personal responsibility of the carrying out the task decreases. In the study, experimenter wore a uniform or laboratory coat which symbolized higher status of the person thus influencing the increasing obedience. Peer support also influence the level of obedience, if the person have the social support of their friends or the presence of others that disobey the authority, this will reduces the level of obedience. Proximity of the authority will also affect the level of obedience. It is easier to resist orders or instruction from long distant than close by (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011).

Conformity

Conformity is a trait that makes people change their behaviour to fit social norms and behave according to the wishes of others (Crutchfield, 1955). In a group, people change their beliefs and attitudes to match them to the majority of the people within the group. When an individual conform, he is also being obedient and in order for people to comply, there must be a perceived authority within the group who can influences the behavior of member of that group. Without this authority figure, it is hard to make members of a group to conform. And if a member of this group fails to conform, he faces the punishment of the authority and in turn loses his <https://assignbuster.com/similarities-and-differences-between-concepts-of-compliance-psychology-essay/>

credibility which is so important for him. It is this pressure that makes people to conform (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

There are much experiments (Asch, 1951; Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003) done to show that when confronted by social norms individuals will often adjust their behaviour to closer approximate of the perceived norm.

In the Aarts & Dijksterhuis (2003) experiment participants who were exposed to pictures of a situation where there is a social expectation of silence, a library, were later quieter on a pronunciation task than the participants who were shown pictures of a normally noisy situation, example, a railway station. This showed that the normative behaviour of being silent had been unconsciously activated in those subjects who saw the library picture.

The Asch (1951) experiment involved subjects performing a perception task, saying which of a selection of lines matched a control line in length.

Unknown to the subject the other participants in the room were all confederates, and the seating was arranged so that the confederates would each give their answer to the trial in turn, with the subject giving their answer last or second to last. On certain trials the confederates would all give the same incorrect answer to the question. The experiment showed that around 76% of the subjects would conform to the incorrect answer at least once. After the experiment ended, participants were asked on why they conformed to the incorrect majority during the trials. All participants reported feeling uncertainty and doubt as a result of the differing opinions between themselves and that of the group. The majority of participants admitted knowing that they saw the lines differently to the group but

thought they may have perceived it wrongly and that the group actually is right. Others simply went along with the group in order not to stand out or appeared as stupid and to avoid any conflict with the rest. A small minority reported actually seeing the lines same as what the group did. It seems that human beings conformed to avoid social disapproval and it also appeared that nobody wants to be the only outstanding person to voice a different answer or opinion (Asch, 1951).

From the study done by Asch (1951), there were factors found to influence the increase or decrease in conformity. First of all, conformity seems to increase as the size of the group grows and when the group size is small, with only four to five person, there seems to be lesser effect. And when it comes to difficult task, participants who were uncertain of the answer will almost certainly tends to look at others in the group for conformity.

Conformity also increases when the status of the group is higher or more knowledgeable and almost always decreases when individuals were to provide answer privately without the presence of the rest of the group. The study suggested that individual conformed so as to go along with the majority as the individual are concern of how they appeared in the eyes of others.

It is interesting to note that while conformity emphasizes on the power of the majority to force the minority to conform their behaviour to the group's expectations of how they should act, there are research being done recently on minority social influence (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011). Minority social influence refers to a form of social influence in which the deviant minority rejects the group norms and influence the majority to change their

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behaviour. Given this change in the process, researchers have begun to explore how certain kinds of minorities can persuade the majority to change their behaviour. The research shows that a minority which presents its point of view in a confident, consistent, yet flexible manner can overcome an uncertain or uninvolved majority.

Difference

The differences between obedience, conformity and compliance is that, in obedience, there is a perceived difference of status between the one who gives the instruction and the individual who obeys without question. And in conformity, it is the individual's fear of social disapproval and being different from the group. On the other hand, it is peer pressure that brings in the conformity among the members of a group. Conformity is also affected by whether the individual's culture is orientated towards individualism or collectivism (Bond & Smith, 1996), however, compliance and obedience are less likely to be affected by this particular factor.

Similarity

The concepts of compliance, obedience and conformity, are all interrelated and shared with some similarities between them. Both compliance and conformity have shown to be improved when there are positive interpersonal attitudes (Gordon, 1996). Likewise, having attention to incidental similarities between the requester and the individual who obeys has shown to increase compliance (Burger et al., 2004) by improving the relationship between the two. Similarly cohesiveness of the group has been shown to affect the conformity (Crandall, 1988).

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Compliance and obedience also have a similarity in the foot-in-the-door approach. Studies have shown that having the participant commit to a small act initially, such as accepting a taster at a supermarket, can lead to improvement in compliance to further request in the later stage (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). This is also reflected in the Milgram (1963) experiments on obedience where the subject built up from smaller shocks to larger ones.

Compliance, obedience and conformity are all subjected to the effects of informational social influence. Conformity is obviously based on informational social influence and studies (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1990, 2000) have further provided evidence for the normative focus theory; that the saliency of the social norm has a significant correlation to conformity.

Compliance is subject to informational social influence under Cialdini's category of social validation (Vaughan & Hogg, 2011), which targeted on the individual's desire to fit with the actions and expectations of the society.

Studies have also shown that the rate of obedience to destructive commands drops sharply if the participants are reminded about the amount of responsibility that will fall on their shoulders (Hamilton, 1978).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are indeed many common aspects between compliance, obedience and conformity, however, there seems to be more similarities between compliance and obedience than those shared by conformity.