

Milgram essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Numerous of unethical experiments over time caused many mental and physical trauma towards countless of people who were basically treated like guinea pigs. The article, “ Patients were Guinea Pigs, Analysis Finds,” showed an experiment of how the human body will react if radioactive dye was injected in them. This shows how far people are willing to go to search for knowledge that will harm others. The article states, “ Patients are not always fully informed that they are guinea pigs in medical research studies authorized by the U.

S. Food and Drug Administration. Innocent people are used and suffer in experiments just so society can obtain information in an unethical way just like Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiment. Even though Milgram’s experiment exemplifies people’s unwillingness to confront those who abuse authority, he does it in a corrupt way by lying and harming others. Some people believe Milgram’s experiment to be just. People who are against the experiment argue that the experiment is unethical for different reasons. Stanley Milgram’s experiment is one of the most classic, yet controversial experiment in the world. Milgram wanted to demonstrate that ordinary people can be influenced to perpetrate pain in a situation where they are instructed to obey an authority figure.

Therefore, Milgram tried to prove the willingness of people to obey an authority figure who instructed the participants to perform a sequence of doings which conflicted destruction on others and would have an influence on their own personal morality. Milgram’s started off by posting newspaper ads to recruit forty men. In exchange for their participation, each person was paid \$4. 00. Milgram generated an intimidating shock generator, with shock

levels starting at thirty volts and increasing in fifteen-volt increments all the way up to 450 volts. Each participant took the role of a “ teacher” who would then deliver a shock to the “ student” every time an incorrect answer was said. While the participant assumed that he was distributing physical shocks to the student, the student was actually a confederate in the experiment who was merely acting to be shocked. As the experiment proceeded, the participant would hear the learner begged to be unconstrained or even complain about a heart condition.

Beyond this point, the learner became utterly strained and refused to answer any more questions. The experimenter then demanded the participant to continue with the experiment. Milgram’s results showed that some teachers refused to continue with the shocks early on, regardless of commanding from the experimenter. This is the type of response Milgram expected as the norm, but Milgram was surprised to find those who questioned authority were in the minority. Sixty-five percent of the teachers were willing to progress to the maximum voltage level. People support Milgram’s experiment because we learn something important from his experiment.

Milgram’s experiment showed that people are more prone to obey the presence of an authority figure. Milgram stated, “ Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority. ” 3 Hearing the “ learners” shriek, the subjects continued with the experiment because they were told to continue. Feeling agitated and stressed, the

subjects obeyed the experimenter because they are the authorities.

Although the subjects obeyed, the subjects were put in a lot of pressure.

Another important aspect that we learn is that “ without obedience to a relevant ruling authority there could not be a civil society. ” Meyer says, “ The value of having civil order is that one can do his duty, or whatever interests him, or whatever seems to benefit him at the moment, and leave the agonizing to others. ”² Even though participants seem to accept the response and continued shocking, they felt extremely uncomfortable with continuing. Being told to continue, the subjects believed it was their duty to remain in the experiment. People are supporters of Milgram’s experiment because we learn a distinct conflict between the need to obey the relevant ruling authority and the need to follow your conscience and yet many people failed on doing what is morally right. People support Milgram’s experiment because we learn something new from his studies. We learn that more participants obeyed than what scientists initially thought of.

Predicting three out of hundred would deliver the maximum shocks, scientists turned out to be wrong. In reality, 65% of the participants in Milgram’s study delivered the maximum shocks. Pressuring the subjects, the experimenter gave certain commands such as, “ The experiment requires that you continue” or “ You have no other choice, you must go on. ” Knowing the “ learners” are getting shocked, subjects carried on with the shocking due to the experimenter’s orders. Even though the subjects continued with the experiment, they were distressed and frantic. Another new thing we learn was that many subjects were glad to participate in the experiment.

Meyer states, “ Eighty-three and seven-tenths percent said they were glad and only 1.

3 percent were sorry; 15 percent were neither sorry nor glad. 2 According to Milgram, “ two-thirds of this studies participants fall into the category of ‘ obedient’ subjects, and that they represent ordinary people drawn from the working, managerial, and professional classes. ” 3 Although subjects were glad they participated in the experiment, they were lied to and experienced a vast amount of trauma. Many people critiques Milgram’s experiment to be unethical because Milgram caused the subjects an intensive amount of psychological trauma.

The subject’s facial expressions showed emotional distress. For example, one of the men was frowning from all of the anxiety he was going through.

Frowning from grief, the man thought the “ student” was undergoing pain from the shocks. I can see all of the participants’ facial expressions that they are worried and horrified. Another psychological trauma the subjects showed was their body language. According to Baumrind, “ Subjects were observed to sweat, tremble, stutter, bite their lips, groan, and dig their fingernails into their flesh. ” 1 The subject, a mature and initially poised businessman, pushed his fist into his forehead because he wanted to stop. Approaching a point of tense breakdown, he began convulsing and mumbling.

Twitching from emotional disturbance, the subject began to pull on his ear lobe and twist his hands. Within twenty minutes, the normal, confident man became an emotional wreck, which others have gone through as well. The subjects revealed an unexpected outcome due to their trauma. An

unexpected sign of tension was the regular occurrence of nervous laughter, which in some subjects developed into uncontrollable seizures. Milgram said, “ On one occasion we observed a seizure so violently convulsive that it was necessary to call a halt to the experiment. ³ The subjects were assured that they would leave the laboratory in a state of well-being, but instead, went through seizures. “ Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, which was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse,” says Milgram about the mature and poised businessman.

Muttering, “ Oh God, let’s stop it,” he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter and obeyed to the end. The subjects clearly suffered psychological trauma, which Baumrind points out, “ From the subject’s point of view procedures which involve loss of dignity, self-esteem, and trust in rational authority are probably most harmful in the long run and require the most thoughtfully planned reparations, if engaged in at all. ” ¹ Critics find Milgram’s experiment to be unethical because Milgram deceived the subjects. Milgram deceived the subjects about purpose.

He deceived the subjects from the beginning by putting out advertisements in newspapers to recruit people who he would like to take part in a study which was told to be about memory, but the experiment was really about obedience. On arriving at a university laboratory in response to a classified ad offering volunteers \$4 for one hour’s participation in an experiment on memory. ” ³ Trying to get participants, Milgram expressed that the participants will get paid if they fully contributed in the experiment. Thinking the experiment would be simple, the subjects decided to participate, but

little did they know what they were getting themselves into. Trusting the experimenter, the subjects obeyed and listened to the experimenter. Although the subjects continued and participated in the experiment, Milgram did not get their informed consent about the actual experiment, which makes his studies unethical. Milgram also deceived the subjects by his experimental design. The learner, an actor, would always have this role and pretend to receive shocks.

The teacher, a participant, would be giving the shocks to the ‘learner’ when he would make a mistake as a way of learning not to make mistakes. The real participant then sees the learner being strapped into the chair.

Explaining to the participant, Milgram shows the electro paste that prevents any blistering or burning. Believing the electro paste will help, subjects continued with the experiment because they heard the shocks are not dangerous. Baumrind states, “ It is obvious from Milgram’s own descriptions that most of his subjects were concerned about their victims and did trust the experimenter, and that their distressful conflict was generated in part by the consequences of these two disparate but appropriate attitudes. ¹ Even though the subjects felt like something was wrong, they trusted everything that the experimenter has said to them. Overall, Milgram deceived the participants from the start as he did not present what the experiment was actually trying to measure. People may find Milgram’s experiment to be ethical or unethical, but I believe his experiment is unethical.

Although the experiment gave knowledge of the common-good and obedience to the society, Milgram caused participants psychological damage

like feeling sad because they were lied to, and moral degrading like having doubts about their own personality. The experiment caused most of the participants to have extreme distress, which was an unintended result of them being lied to about the experiment. The participants were assured that the experiment was legitimate and was given a false sense of security that their psychological well-being would be looked after.

“ He has placed innocent and naive subjects under great emotional strain and pressure in selfish obedience to his quest for his knowledge. ” I don't believe we need to quest for knowledge of obedience from a biased experiment because the experiment does not exemplify the society as a whole.