Dynamics of Conformity in the Formation of Individual Attitudes and Behavior in Groups

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ABSTRACT

Social conformity and group pressure play an important role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in a group. Individuals are often influenced by existing social norms, either through normative conformity related to the desire to be accepted or informational conformity that arises from the belief that the group has more valid information. This influence can lead to a change in attitude or behavior, even though it sometimes conflicts with the individual's personal values. For example, in some cases, conformity can strengthen group efficiency and create the uniformity needed in a work setting or team. Excessive conformity can lead to deviations from moral principles and exacerbate social inequalities, especially in groups that espouse biased or discriminatory views. Given this, it is important to raise awareness of the impact of conformity in social interactions, as well as create space for individuals to maintain their personal views. This research provides insight into the dynamics of in-group conformity and how it affects individual behavior in both positive and negative ways.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in individual behavior in groups are often influenced by social pressure, which can create conformity in actions and attitudes. Social conformity refers to the tendency of individuals to change their attitudes, views, or behaviors to conform to the norms or expectations that exist within a group. This phenomenon occurs in various spheres of daily life, ranging from social interaction, work, to education. In many situations, individuals tend to follow the behavior of the majority even if it goes against their personal opinions (Brown & Pehrson, 2019). This process occurs without full awareness of the group's influence, which can ultimately lead to significant changes in the way individuals interact or make decisions (Cialdini, 2001).

Conformity can have a profound impact on individual behavior and attitudes in more structured environments, such as in organizations or social groups that have hierarchies and shared goals. Research by Moscovici (1976) shows that individuals exposed to consistent group pressure tend to be more changeable, even if they initially disagree with the majority view. This phenomenon can be seen in studies that explore how individuals involved in stronger or

dominant groups may change their attitudes to conform to prevailing norms, often without critical consideration of the change (Amri & Khayru, 2022).

One of the main problems associated with social conformity is its impact that can change individual behavior unconsciously. Many individuals do not realize that they have changed due to group pressure, which causes them to make decisions that may not be in line with their personal values or beliefs. This can have a profound effect on professional and social decision-making, where the choices made can be detrimental to the individual. Not only that, this phenomenon can also affect the dynamics of the group itself, creating unhealthy uniformity and curbing creativity and innovation. Research by Crutchfield (1955) shows that although individuals feel that they are free to choose, social conformity often suppresses their freedom of thought.

Another challenge is that the degree of conformity can differ between individuals and situations, so the impact can vary widely. Not all individuals experience the same changes in attitude and behavior when exposed to social pressure. Factors such as personality, social status and

perceptions of the group can influence the extent to which an individual will be affected by group norms. This leads to uncertainty in predicting the impact of social conformity, which often complicates efforts to understand and manage group dynamics in larger settings. Research by Bond and Smith (1996) also revealed that in some cases, individuals may refrain from conforming despite strong group pressure, indicating the complexity of this phenomenon.

Observing the influence of social conformity on changes in individual attitudes and behaviors is important because this phenomenon has a profound effect in various aspects of life. From education to the workplace, understanding how conformity influences individual decisions and attitudes can help design more effective strategies in human resource management, teaching and social interaction. Group influence can play a good role in motivating individuals to behave more productively or it can lead to harmful decisions if group pressure leads to deviations from healthy personal values.

This research aims to examine how social pressure and conformity can influence changes in the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in groups. The main focus of this research is to understand how individuals may change in response to social pressure from the group, as well as the factors that influence the extent of such change. Hopefully, this research can provide insight into the dynamics of social conformity in diverse groups.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study approach to understand the influence of social conformity on changes in individual attitudes and behavior in groups. This literature study will examine various articles, books, and journals that discuss social conformity theory, as well as how the phenomenon affects individuals in social groups. This approach allows the researcher to gain insights from previous relevant studies and map the relationship between social conformity and in-group behavior change. This literature review will also include an analysis of various theoretical models that explain the conformity process, such as the conformity model developed by Deutsch and Gerard (1955), which distinguishes between informational and normative conformity. The researcher in this case will analyze articles that show how these two types of conformity affect changes in the attitudes of individuals in the group.

In order to explore this topic further, this study will review literature that includes various classic and modern experiments on conformity, such as

Asch's (1951) study that examined how group pressure affects individual decisions. Not only that, the literature will also include studies on conformity in more specific groups, such as work groups and social groups, as well as how social and cultural perspectives can influence the level of conformity. Research through this approach helps researchers to gain a more thorough understanding of how social conformity operates in various situations, as well as the factors that influence changes in the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in groups.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social pressure and conformity play a significant role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of individuals within a group. Social conformity refers to changing one's attitudes, views, or behaviors to conform to the norms or expectations of the group. This conformity can occur in various forms, either explicitly (through clear rules or norms) or implicitly (through more indirect pressure from the group) (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Individuals who feel the need to be accepted in the group or avoid conflict, they are more likely to change their attitudes or behaviors to fit the prevailing standards in the group (Aronson, 2019).

One of the most recognized forms of conformity is normative conformity, which occurs when individuals follow group norms to gain approval or avoid rejection (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Individuals often change their attitudes or behaviors to be accepted in the group, even though they may not fully agree with the norms or expectations. For example, in a friendship group, one may feel pressured to conform to a certain style of dress or way of speaking, even though they do not share the same personal preferences. This kind of social pressure can cause individuals to behave in accordance with group expectations, even if it goes against their personal values or beliefs (Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011).

Informational conformity occurs when individuals change their attitudes or behaviors because they believe that the group has more appropriate or more valid information than their personal views (Suhay, 2015). Faced with this kind of situation, individuals tend to follow what the group does because they want to make the right decision or gain a more accurate understanding. For example, in uncertain situations, such as when someone first joins a social group or organization, they may be more inclined to follow the group's decision, as they perceive the group to have more knowledge about the issue being discussed. This conformity is not because of direct social pressure, but because of the desire to obtain information that is considered correct.

One classic experiment that illustrates the influence of conformity is Asch's (1951) experiment, which shows how individuals can change their opinions or actions even though they know that the group's decision is wrong. Participants in this experiment were asked to judge the length of a line and indicate which one best fit the reference line. Most participants knew the answer, but they often followed the majority group's answer, which was clearly wrong. The results of this experiment show how powerful social pressure can be in changing an individual's decisions and perceptions, even when the individual is aware that the decision is wrong.

Social pressure emanating from groups can bring about significant changes in individual attitudes and behaviors, however, the impact varies depending on a number of factors, including the individual's social status within the group, the type of group, as well as how strong the social ties are between the individual and the group. According to Turner (1991), individuals who have strong social ties to the group are more likely to conform because they want to maintain positive relationships with other group members. In contrast, individuals who do not have strong emotional or social attachments to the group may be more likely to maintain their personal views or behaviors, even if they feel pressured.

Not only positive impacts, conformity can also have negative impacts, especially if the group norms are incompatible with broader social values or if excessive conformity leads to harmful behaviors. For example, in organizations, individuals may feel pressured to follow unethical rules or practices simply because the group or their superiors want them to (Zimbardo, 1973). In these situations, the pressure to "fit in" may lead individuals to ignore their moral judgment or personal principles in favor of acceptance. This phenomenon is often seen in situations where group members find it difficult to express disagreement or defy group norms, even though they know that the behavior is incorrect or detrimental to others.

Conformity can also reinforce social stereotypes and exacerbate social inequalities, as individuals tend to conform to the majority views of the group, which may be biased or discriminatory (Moussaïd et al., 2013). For example, in a group that has a negative view of a particular ethnic group, individuals in the group may change their attitudes to conform to that view, even though they previously had no prejudice against the group (Dovidio et al., 2009). This process of conformity can exacerbate social polarization and increase intergroup tensions.

Not only that, social conformity can also play an important role in increasing group efficiency, but with some risks. For example, in some cases, conformity allows groups to function more harmoniously and organized, with members consistently following group norms and rules. For example, in sports teams or professional organizations, conformity to agreed strategies or tactics can improve overall team performance. Excessive conformity in these situations can also lead to reduced creativity, where group members avoid new or alternative ideas just to stay true to the existing norms (Janis, 1972).

Group dynamics also play a major role in influencing the level of conformity that occurs within the group. Groups with a strong hierarchical structure, where some individuals hold greater authority or control, may have a greater ability to pressure other individuals to conform (French & Raven, 1959). Individuals who are lower in the hierarchy are more likely to follow directions or norms set by group authorities, even if they do not fully agree with those norms.

Individual personality is also an important factor that influences the extent to which a person will be affected by in-group social pressure. Research shows that individuals with a degree of openness to new experiences and a high level of self-confidence tend to be less affected by social conformity (McCrae & Costa, 1996). In contrast, individuals who are more anxious or less confident may be more likely to change their attitudes or behaviors to fit in with the group, even if it goes against their personal values.

Social pressure and conformity can lead to negative behavioral changes, but individuals can also use conformity to create positive changes in themselves. For example, in a group that supports healthy lifestyles or good study habits, individuals may be influenced to adopt healthier or more productive behaviors through conformity to group norms that support these (Latané, 1996). Conformity in this case can be an effective tool for promoting positive behaviors within the group, provided that the norms are not detrimental to group members.

Social pressure and conformity as a whole have a major influence on the behavior and attitudes of individuals in groups. This influence can be positive or negative, depending on the group context, group goals and individual factors involved. Given this, it is important to understand the dynamics of conformity in various social situations to assess how conformity can shape social interactions and how individuals can maintain their personal identity in the face of group pressure.

CONCLUSION

Social pressure and conformity have a significant impact on shaping individual attitudes and behaviors in groups. Individuals often feel pressured to conform to group norms or expectations, either through normative conformity that leads to seeking acceptance or informational conformity that is influenced by the belief that the group has more valid information. In many cases, these changes in attitude or behavior are made without full awareness of their impact, which can lead to decisions that are incompatible with the individual's personal values. While conformity can have benefits in building group cohesion, such as in work teams or organizations, it can also present challenges, especially if group norms conflict with broader moral principles.

Suggestions that can be made it is important for individuals and groups to be more aware of the process of conformity and its impact on social behavior. Developing awareness of the potential for social pressure to alter one's attitudes and decisions will help individuals to make wiser choices, especially in stressful situations. Not only that, groups should build an environment that supports diversity of opinions and creativity, and provide space for individuals to express their views without fear of rejection. This can reduce the negative impact of conformity and promote positive changes in social interaction and decision-making within the group.

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