

I'm not a robot































Fact Checked Content Last Updated: 16.09.2022 9 min reading time Content creation process designed by Content cross-checked by Content quality checked by Save Article Save Article Many factors influence how we interact with our environment, and social influence processes play a part in many different areas, including sales, marketing, peer pressure, socialisation, persuasion, obedience, and even large-scale political and social change. Social influence is any change in behaviour, emotion or thinking that other individuals cause, even if their presence is only imagined, expected or implied. It also includes the interpersonal processes that lead to behaviour, emotion or thinking changes. In short, its about how people change their minds. Social influence comprises majority influence (conformity) and minority influence. Majority influence is how a larger group influences an individual or smaller group. In psychology, most investigations into social influence deal with majority influence, as psychology focuses on the individual. Minority influence is when an individual or smaller group influences a larger group. Although this has been studied in psychology, this type of large-scale social change is more the domain of sociology. Kelmans Social Influence Theory (1958) introduces three types of social influence.Latans Social Impact Theory (1981); a very useful mathematical model for explaining social impact.Kelmans theory is older, so much more research up to date has been based on his theory. These two theories will be explored in more detail below.Kelman describes three levels of depth of social influence; internalisation, identification, and compliance. Any of these three could be the outcome when a group puts pressure on an individual. You can imagine the three subtypes as a continuum of how much a person matches up with a group inside their mind and with their behaviour. On the lowest level, a person is separate from a group, and at the highest level, completely unified with a group.Process of social influence. In compliance, the individual and group are separate, and the group, in terms of thinking and behaviour.Following the religion of your parents even after theyve passed on.Retaining your cultural customs even if youre far from your native land.Waiting at the crossroads even if theres no car or person in sight.A good god? A child who completes their school work? What is obedience? What is compliance? What is identification?An individual goes along with whats expected in public but holds different views in private. This type of social influence is short-lived and the behaviour usually stops once the individual isnt monitored. Most marketing and sales aim to make customers comply with the business's request for the consumer to buy their products or use their services. Wearing a uniform to school but taking it off as soon as possible when you get home.Seeing an advertisement on the television that says Buy Slurpy Delight! and buying it next time youre in the supermarket. Picking up a friend from the airport because they asked you to.What is identification?Our identification of ourselves and the world around us has great importance. How does identification affect us and those around us?Identification is the medium level of social influence, where an individual identifies with the group or individuals in the group because they value the group and want to belong to it. The individual might change some behaviours in public as well as in private but might not agree with all aspects of the group's behaviour or thinking.The process of identification most strongly determines socialisation, peer pressure and looking up to role models. Leaders or celebrities rely on identification you might not like all aspects of a specific footballers life or demeanour but still put their poster up on your wall, maybe because you look up to them. Cutting your hair in the most popular style.Buying a celebrity-endorsed shade of lipstick.Voting for a politician because they are plain-spoken and down-to-earth, not because they are particularly well-suited to the job.Acting in a particularly loud and raucous manner every time you're out with your friends. What is internalisation?Internalisation is the deepest type of conformity. Here, the individual has completely taken on the expectations of the group, in private as well as in public. This change continues on indefinitely, even in the absence of the group. In essence, internalisation leads to new behaviour. The individual is now completely part of the group, in terms of thinking and behaviour.Following the religion of your parents even after theyve passed on.Retaining your cultural customs even if youre far from your native land.Waiting at the crossroads even if theres no car or person in sight.A good god? A child who completes their school work? What is obedience? What is compliance? What is identification?A type of social influence where the pressure doesnt come from a peer but rather stems from an authority figure who directly instructs or gives orders.Usually, these authority figures have the power to punish disobedience they have legitimate authority. Depending on whether the individual is the one taking or giving the orders, they are either identifying with a role or complying with orders. The first studies into obedience started after World War II when the big question was whether there were people whose personalities were just naturally more obedient compared to others. Researchers who looked into this were Theodor Adorno and Stanley Milgram.Milgram demonstrated that the circumstances (situational variables e.g. whether an authority figure wears a uniform) determined the likelihood of a person to obey. To explain his findings, he later developed his Agency Theory which states that to be effective, the authority must be legitimate.It is important to know what a majority or a minority influence is. How does this relate to the influences of psychology?Majority and minority influences are terms that refer to which direction the influence flows between a larger group (majority) and a smaller group or individual (minority).In majority influence or conformity, the larger group influences the individual or smaller group. There are two explanations of why people conform: either they want to be accepted in a group (normative influence as investigated by Asch and Zimbardo), or they want to do what is correct informational influence as investigated by Sherif. Informational influence is more important in situations where there is no clear answer. Asch also found that group size, unanimity and task difficulty affect conformity.Conformity does not have to be enforced with specific instructions like obedience. Rather its the sum of all the spoken and unspoken social norms and expectations that a person has to follow to be part of a group. Whether the internal world that leads to obedience is more one's compliance or identification is still a matter of debate (see Zimbardo as his Stanford Prison Experiment versus the BBC Prison Study. There are also ways in which any social influence can be resisted. The two main factors determining if one can resist social influence are whether a person is supported or whether they feel in control of their own decisions. In minority influence, the individual or smaller group influences the larger group and causes a change in the behaviour or thinking of the larger group. This social change is more likely to be permanent and internalised. The main factors that contribute to social change are consistency, the commitment of the minority group and flexibility of the majority group. An example of minority influence leading to social change is the process by which suffragettes obtained the vote for women in the western world. At the time the suffragettes were founded, women couldn't vote, have their own money, or even have custody over their own children. This often led to devastating abuses and miserable lives for women.Feminism movement as an example of minority influence. Katarina Gade, StudySmarter Originals (images from Canva)In the beginning, the vote was fought for by small groups of women protesting their lack of say in government and in life by having sit-ins and demonstrations, being arrested and going on hunger strikes. But over time many men and women alike started to support their cause. The women's rights movement became a mass movement; resulting in the majority taking on the thinking of a few.Nowadays, its normal for women to be able to vote and have a bank account. What started as a handful of women ended up leading to changes benefitting women in law and society that are still transforming society today.Social influence means changes in behaviour or thinking as a result of influence by others.Social influence comprises majority influence/conformity, minority influence and resistance to social influence.Majority influence or conformity is when a large group influences an individual or minority.Minority influence is when an individual or smaller group influences a larger group and causes a change in the behaviour or thinking of the larger group. This social change is more likely to be permanent and internalised. The main factors that contribute to social change are consistency, the commitment of the minority group and flexibility of the majority group. 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the participants to high levels of stress, as evidenced by the prisoner who went crazy and had to be released, as well as the other participants who explicitly consented to all aspects of the experiment, such as being arrested, as a person complies with obeys the orders of an authority figure. Stanley Milgram: Obedience experimentsThe aim of Milgrams (1963) obedience study was to investigate the extent to which people obey the orders of an authority figure. The procedure to test for this variations of which are now termed the Milgram paradigm was as follows:40 American male participants aged 20-50 were told they were taking part in an study of the effects of punishment on memory and learning.The confederate experimenter (wearing a lab coat to create an impression of authority) told the participant that he had been randomly assigned the role of teacher and that another participant (who was another confederate) had been randomly assigned the role of learner.The experimenter told the participant the test would involve giving increasingly powerful electric shocks to the learner from a machine in the room next door (marked with different voltage levels).The participant watched the learner be strapped into into a chair and have electrodes attached to his body. The participant was also given a 45 volt shock himself so that he believed everything was real.The participant teacher (in the room next door) was instructed to teach the learner a list of word pairs. For each wrong answer from the learner, the teacher had to give him an electric shock. These electric shocks increased in power with each wrong answer starting at 15 volts and increasing by 15 volts each time all the way up to 450 volts.Once electric shocks reached 150 volts, the learner began to protest. These protests (pre-recorded and played via a tape recorder) increased in intensity with the increasing voltage. At 315 volts, the learner screamed in pain. After 330 volts, the learner went silent.If the participant asked to stop the experiment, the experimenter would reply with one of four successive verbal prods:Please continue or please go onThe experiment requires that you continueIt is absolutely essential that you continueYou have no other choice, you must go onThe results of the experiment were as follows:26 out of 40 participants (65%) administered shocks all the way up to the maximum of 450 volts.40 out of 40 participants (100%) administered shocks up to 300 volts.Most participants displayed physical symptoms of discomfort at what they were doing such as sweating, twitching, and nervously laughing. 3 participants suffered seizures from the stress of what they were doing.Milgrams study was in part motivated by a desire to understand why Nazi soldiers in World War 2 acted how they did. For example, shortly before Milgrams study, Adolf Eichmann a senior Nazi officer responsible for deporting Jews to ghettos and concentration camps defended his actions at trial by repeatedly saying I was only following orders. Milgram wanted to know if the German people had a uniquely obedient disposition that explained their behaviour. The study suggests not: American people will also obey the demands of an authority figure even if it means going against their moral compass.AO3 evaluation points: Milgram experimentsStrengths of Milgrams experiments:Reliable: Milgrams results have been replicated several times over the decades, which suggests the results are reliable.Practical applications: Milgrams experiments demonstrate the extent to which humans obey authority even if doing so may be dangerous. This is a valuable psychological insight that could have beneficial applications in society. For example, there are several examples of (typically junior) doctors and nurses knowingly following orders that have injured or killed patients. Training junior doctors and nurses of the dangers of obedience (as demonstrated by Milgrams experiments) could avoid this.Weaknesses of Milgrams experiments:Unethical: Milgrams study was initially considered so unethical that Milgrams membership of the American Psychological Association was suspended. Among the criticisms was the extreme stress placed upon the participants, as evidenced by the 3 who suffered seizures. However, the participants were debriefed after the study and it can be argued that the findings of the experiments are so valuable that the benefits of conducting them outweigh the distress caused to participants.Methodological concerns: There have also been several methodological criticisms levelled at Milgrams study. For example, some psychologists have argued that many participants in Milgrams study didnt actually believe the shocks were real. If so, then Milgrams findings would likely not be valid when applied to real life. However, in post-study interviews, 75% of participants said they believed the shocks were real. And further, the physiological symptoms of stress observed in many of the participants suggest they really did believe they were inflicting harm.Variables affecting obedienceMilgram conducted variations of the original experiment above to test how different situational variables affect obedience.ProximityIn subsequent studies, Milgram found that obedience declined if the participant was physically closer to the learner. For example, when the participant and the learner were in the same room, obedience fell to 40% from 65%. In one experiment, the participant teacher had to actually hold the learners arm onto a shock plate, which resulted in just 30% of participants completing the experiment (again vs. 65% in the original experiment).The proximity of the authority figure also affects obedience. In experiments where the experimenter gave instructions to the participant via telephone, obedience fell to 21% compared to the original 65%.LocationMilgram also carried out the study in different settings and found that obedience increases in institutional and official-seeming environments. For example, Milgrams original experiment (65% obedience) was conducted at the prestigious Yale University. But when Milgram replicated the experiment in an office in a bad part of town, obedience dropped to 47.5%.UniformsIn Milgrams original experiment, the experimenter wore a lab coat and instructed the teacher to increase the voltage. However, in another variation of the experiment, the experimenter was replaced mid-way through by someone wearing ordinary clothes, who told the participant to increase the voltage with each wrong answer. In this variation, obedience was 20% rather than 65%.The influence of uniform is further supported byBickman (1974). Bickman found that 38% of participants obeyed the orders of someone wearing a security guards uniform compared to 19% when wearing ordinary clothes and 14% when wearing a milkmans uniform.Explanations of obedienceAgentic stateMilgrams distinction between an agentic state and autonomous state explains (at least partly) why people obey authority:Autonomous state: When an individual is freely and consciously in control of their actions and thus takes responsibility for them.Agentic state: When an individual becomes de-individuated and considers themselves an agent (tool) of an authority figure and thus not personally responsible for their actions.According to Milgrams theory, we are taught from a young age that obedience is necessary for an orderly society. But this requires individuals to give up some amount of free will. In situations where an individual obeys an authority figure, they (mentally) hand over responsibility for their actions to the person giving the orders. In the agentic state, a person will obey instructions that go against their moral compass because they do not consider themselves personally responsible for them.Legitimacy of authorityAnother reason for obedience is that individuals may accept an authority figure has a legitimate right to be giving orders. This ties in with the agentic state: we are taught that obedience to authority figures (e.g. parents, teachers, police) is necessary for an orderly society and thus are more likely to do as they say.Some of the variables in Milgrams experiments clearly added to the perceived legitimacy of the experimenters authority. Participants were more likely to obey the experimenter if he was wearing a lab coat, and the prestigious location of Yale University likely increased the perceived legitimacy of the experimenter in the participants eyes. If a person accepts an authority figure as legitimate, that person will feel they have a duty to do as the authority figure says.The dispositional explanation of obedience: The authoritarian personalityA further explanation of obedience is that some people have an inherent disposition towards obedience. This would be an internal explanation of obedience because it explains obedience as part of someones personality rather than an external one that explains obedience as a result of the environment they are in.Milgram wanted to know if the German people were uniquely disposed towards obedience and concluded not. However, within populations (German, American, or other), there may be individuals whose personality is more disposed to obedience and authoritarianism. Psychologist Erich Fromm proposed the authoritarian personality: people whose disposition makes them submissive to authority and dominating of people with lower status within the hierarchy and members of an out-group.Adorno et al (1950) created the F-scale personality test to measure the authoritarian personality in people. In later research, Milgram found that people who were highly obedient in his experiments scored higher on the F-scale than those who disobeyed. This suggests that the authoritarian personality type can (at least partly) explain obedience. Resistance to social influenceSocial influence has both positive and negative effects. It would be a chaotic society if nobody ever conformed to social roles (e.g. children just ignored parents, students ignored teachers, etc.) and things like teamwork would be practically impossible. But sometimes social influence can have negative effects, like being peer-pressured into dangerous behaviour or obeying an authority figure who is asking you to do something immoral (e.g. Milgrams experiments).So, sometimes individuals may choose to assert their own free choice and resist social influence. To resist conformity is non-conformism, and to resist obedience is disobedience.Example question: Discuss what psychological research has told us about why people resist social influence. [16 marks]Explanations of resistance to social influenceSocial supportHaving another person on your side (social support) greatly reduces the effects social influence increasing both non-conformism and disobedience.Conformity: As mentioned above, Solomon Asch observed that participant conformity declined from 32% to 5.5% when one of the confederates went against the group and said the correct answer. Having someone else break the unanimity of the group provided social support for the participant to give the answer he really thought.Obedience: In another variation of Milgrams experiments, participants took part in the experiment with two other (confederate) teachers. When the other teachers refused to administer any more electric shocks and left the study, participant obedience dropped from 65% to 10%.Locus of controlRotter (1966) developed a scale to measure a persons locus of control, which is the extent to which they believe they are in control of their life:Internal locus of control: The person believes their own choices shape their lifeE.g. if you do badly in an exam, you blame yourselfExternal locus of control: The person believes their life is controlled by things outside their control such as luck, fate, and circumstanceE.g. if you do badly in an exam, you blame the exam paper or the teacherWhether a person has an internal or external locus of control may affect their level of conformity and obedience:Conformity: A meta-analysis by Avtgis (1998) found that people with an internal locus of control are less likely to conform to group influence than people with an external locus of control.Obedience: Research linking obedience and locus of control is more mixed, but leans in the direction of also suggesting that those with an internal locus of control are less likely to obey an authority figure than those with an external locus of control. This may be because people with an internal locus of control feel they have control over their actions and thus are able to resist the influence of an authority figure.Other factors affecting resistance to social influenceResistance to conformity:Status: People with low status within a group may be motivated to conform to the group in order to gain status.Ironic deviance: If a person feels that the group consensus has been artificially manufactured, they are less likely to conform to it. For example, Conway and Shaller (2005) describe how an office worker who sees his colleagues all using a particular software program may infer that it is good and conform by using it himself, but if he knows they are all using that product simply because the boss told them to use it he may be less likely to conform because he will not perceive the consensus as genuine.Resistance to obedience:Systematic processing: If people are given the opportunity to think through their actions systematically, they may be more likely to disobey unreasonable orders (e.g. Martin et al (2007)).Moral beliefs: People who base decisions on moral principles may also be less likely to obey immoral orders. For example, Milgram described how one of the participants a vicar disobeyed the experimenter because he was obeying a higher authority (God). This is further supported by research from psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, who tested participants from Milgrams studies and found those who based decisions on moral principles were less likely to obey.Reactance: If people feel an authority figure is restricting their free will, they may deliberately go against the authority figure to reassert their free will. Social changeThe social norms of society (i.e. the expected rules for behaviour) are largely determined by majority influence. Social change is the process by which these norms change over time.Minority influenceMinority influence is an important factor for social change. Although majority influence (conformity) determines current social norms, minority influence can convert individuals to reject these social norms and adopt the beliefs and behaviours of a minority. Eventually, if enough people are converted to the minoritys beliefs, they become the new majority and establish new social norms.An example of minority influence would be the spread of Christianity: the minority influence of this initially small movement converted many European countries to become majority Christian. Another example of minority influence would be the suffragettes converting the majority to accept womens rights to vote.Social cryptoamnesia is the process whereby the minority influences a few members of the majority at first, but as these numbers grow it causes a snowball effect where more and more members of the majority get converted at a growing pace.Variables affecting minority influenceThe following 3 variables increase the effectiveness of minority influence: Consistency, commitment, and flexibility.Consistency and commitmentMoscovici and Naffrechoux (1969) conducted experiments on minority influence. Participants were divided into groups of 6 (4 real participants and 2 confederates) and told they were taking part in a study of visual perception. The participants were shown 36 shades of blue and asked to say out loud what the colour was.In the control group (no confederates), participants said the colours were green 0.25% of the time.In the inconsistent minority group (where confederates said 24/36 colours were green), participants said the colours were green 1.25% of the time.In the consistent minority group (where confederates said 36/36 colours were green), participants said the colours were green 8.4% of the time.This suggests minority influence is more effective when the minority are consistent in their beliefs and behaviours.Moscovici also argues that minority influence is most effective when the minority remain committed to their beliefs over time (especially in the face of adversity).FlexibilityAlthough consistency is important, minority influence is less effective if the minority is completely inflexible and unwilling to compromise with the majority.For example, Nemeth (1986) divided participants into groups of 4 (with 1 confederate) to negotiate how much insurance money to pay someone. She found that confederates who demonstrated flexibility were more effective at persuading the majority to accept a low amount than confederates who inflexibly stuck to a very low amount. Memory>>>

**What is informational social influence in psychology. What is minority influence in social psychology. What is social influence in psychology example. What is group influence in social psychology. What is social influence mean in psychology. What paper is social influence in psychology. What is normative social influence in psychology. What is normative social influence in ap psychology. What is resistance to social influence in psychology. What is normative social influence mean in psychology. What is social support in psychology social influence. What is an example of informational social influence in psychology. What is social influence theory in psychology. What is majority social influence in psychology. What is an example of normative social influence in psychology.**