

How the Presence of Others Affects Individual Behavior

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Individual behavior can change when a person is being watched. This principle is determined by certain actions based on social acceptance. Social impact is very important because it can make people comply with the law, some individuals had the capacity to have better performance and other people can help someone else by imitating good behaviors. But the social impact can also have a negative effect because some individuals have an erratic behavior in a crowd for *afraid to make mistakes*.



Social Facilitation

Social facilitation, also known as the audience effect, refers to the idea that an individual's performance of a task improves in the presence of others or when the person is being watched instead of being alone. This theory also states that if the task is more complex, or the individual has no experience with it, then there will be decreased performance and efficacy with more chances of error, a concept that is known as the Yerkes Dodson Law. There are three theories of social facilitation.

Activation theory

The individual becomes active in the presence of others, allowing for the performance of previously rehearsed tasks. Several hypotheses have been tested under this theory, including alertness, monitoring, and challenge hypotheses.

Evaluation approach

This approach suggests that improved individual performance is not merely because an audience is present but because the audience will evaluate that performance.

Self-presentation approach

When an audience is present, the presenter is aware of the effects of negative evaluation

and becomes aroused to improve performance. Similarly, the individual may have a simple task and is confident, thus relying on internal motivation rather than arousal for good performance.

De-Individuation

De-individuation refers to a psychological state in which a person has reduced self-awareness, leading to deviant and uninhibited behavior. A person in a crowd feels anonymous and may engage in actions they would not normally take when they are alone and easily identifiable.

Ideal contributing factors:

- Group size - get lost in the crowd
- Physical anonymity - use of masks, costumes, face paint
- Arousing activities - may lead to an escalation

This refers to violent crowds and even genocide. De-individuation usually results in actions leading to negative effects and consequences, but it can also lead to positive outcomes such as meditation and hobbies. In a group of large people, a person assumes the identity of that group, and personal identity is lost, leading to deviant actions a person would not do when alone.

This also causes reduced responsibility for one's actions because others are involved in it as well. Research by **Diener et al.** states that **people in large, anonymous groups were three times more likely to steal candy.**

Another study was conducted by **Philip Zimbardo at Stanford University where different subjects were randomly assigned the roles of prisoners and guards.** The results showed that subjects conformed to the social group roles they were expected to play, especially in the case of guards who acted authoritatively.

Bystander Effect or Bystander Apathy

This explains that a person will not offer help to a victim when in the presence of other people. The probability of helping others is inversely proportional to the number of people present around the victim. There are several factors that affect bystanders' behavior.

Emergency versus non-emergency situations: Latane and Darley explained that the way a victim asks for help affects behavior. They conducted experiments in which they instructed students to ask the name of the stranger passing by. More strangers replied and gave their names when the students gave their names first. Similarly, one more experiment was performed in which the students were told to ask for a dime from a stranger.

Fewer people helped them when they directly asked for a dime, but when the students said they had lost their wallet and had no money, then more strangers helped them. Also, according to the principle of social influence, people are influenced by how others react to the situation. If other people do not intervene, then the bystander will not offer help either and vice versa.

Ambiguity and consequences: in this context, ambiguity means that a person knows whether the victim needs help or not. In highly ambiguous situations, in which the victim is not asking for help or is not shouting, or the situation is not severe, then the

bystander's reaction time will be longer, and it can be as long as five minutes. In low ambiguous situations, where the victim is yelling for help or there is significant blood loss, the reaction time will be less than a few seconds. In this case, the number of bystanders is irrelevant.

Understanding of environment: if the bystander is present in a known environment, the reaction time will be less since the person knows where to get help. However, in an unfamiliar environment, the reaction time will be longer since the bystander will need to locate resources to help the victim.

Cohesiveness and group membership: cohesiveness means established relationships with other people, such as friends. Rutkowski performed an experiment in which he arranged different groups according to their relationships with one another. In his experiment, he explained that a group of four best friends would respond to a request to help a victim more quickly than a group of people who were not acquainted with one another.

Altruism: this research states that people will help others if they have similarities.

Diffusion of responsibility: Darley and Latane proposed that people are less likely to help a victim in the presence of others, assuming someone else will do so; thus, the responsibility will be diffused. It is also possible that no one will help the victim in the presence of others.

Social Loafing

Social loafing can be described as a phenomenon in which a person in a group exerts less effort to achieve a goal than when alone. Ringelman's experiment showed that when people were asked to pull a rope in groups, they exerted less effort than when they were alone. This phenomenon is indicated in recent studies as well, possibly because individuals believe their efforts will not be recognized in groups. This is consistent with the diffusion of responsibility concept.

Social Control



Image: "Warning signs." by Svenska84.

This can be defined as a person adapting habits to social norms. There are two types:

1. **Formal means of social control:** rules and laws enforced by the government in order to maintain balance in the society.
2. **Informal means of social control:** refers to an individual conforming to standards of behavior that are acceptable in society.

Signs warning of prohibited activities are an example of social control.

The concept of social control is related to another concept known as the **Social order**, which includes the following areas:

- Existing education system
- The law
- Psychiatry
- Social work
- Working environment
- Welfare state

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure, also known as **social pressure**, can be defined as the influence others exert on an individual to change individual attitudes or behavior. This phenomenon can be explained by research in which an adolescent male was told to drive and different scenarios were provided to him. It showed that risk-taking behaviors increased in the presence of peers or passengers and decreased when he was alone.

Social groups affected can include:

- Membership groups: formal or informal members and cliques
- Dissociative groups: wish to avoid associating, behave counter to group norms

Conformity and Obedience

It can be defined as social pressure on an individual to change one's beliefs and attitudes in order to fit in a group. This can be real (in which other people are involved) or

imaginary (norms and society). A good example of this concept is an experiment Jenness performed by giving individuals a glass bottle with beads in it and then asking them to estimate the quantity. Then he placed each person with a group and asked them to again estimate the number of beads. Jenness found that most of them changed their answers according to the group estimates.

There are three types of conformity:

1. **Compliance:** an individual conforms to achieve reward or acceptance by others and to avoid punishment.
2. **Internalization:** a person adopts attitudes and actions which are according to norms and agrees with them.
3. **Identification:** a person adopts an attitude to attain a satisfying relationship with another person or group.

Factors that can influence conformity include:

- Group size: a larger group brings more conformity
- Unanimity: strong pressure not to dissent
- Cohesion: the individual will agree with another individual based on similarities

References

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