

## **The Social influence**

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on the particularity of the social influence's concept in the social psychology. A complex concept that retraces the development of a historical theoretical point of view of the psychosocial approach in the psychological sciences. Through this presentation, we are trying to enlighten the concept to the readers, and showing the pioneering works that has addressed it, and its contemporary interesting in the social psychology.

**Keywords** : Conformity, Normalization, Obedience, Acquiescence.

The social influence's conceptual definition encompasses the concepts of changing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that results from the interpersonal interaction. The concept of social influence organizes all other concepts in the social psychology (S.T. FISKE, 2004). The social influence transforms the social representation and stands out of the attitude change. The agent of the influence has not necessarily the intention of influencing as for the attitude change that occurs in the most cases through the affective dimension. The theories of persuasion and attitude change study the deliberate attempts to change the intentional opinions and messages (Ibid).

The social influence encompasses concepts such as the conformity (S. Ash, 1948), the normalization (M. SHERIF), the obedience (Milgram, 1975), in addition the acquiescence (Freedman, JL & Fraser, S.C, 1966).

The Social influence could be informative when it allows us to understand the world that we are sharing (Deutsch, Gérard, 1955). Moreover, It is normative when it elicits the others approval (Turner, 1995), and helps to avoid the anxiety (Chaiken, 1996) and the social belonging (M. Sherif, 1935).

The social influence's classical studies began with M. Sherif and S. Asch. The first one had adopted the optical illusion paradigm for showing the impact of the norms on the individual judgment (Sherif, 1935).

S. Asch, 1948, was interested in the impressions formation. In a primary study: he asked to interpret the word revolt by agitation and / or revolution when the participants (students) perceive the word Lenin or Jefferson. The objective here is to show how the impression is formed and constructed, which has given birth later to the social cognition.

These two researchers had made a change in the object of judgment and no longer a change in the judgment of the object, and had enlighten that if the object of judgment is confused, the conformity or standardization will be greater (Ibid).

These pioneering studies are to re-analyzed taking into account the interaction between groups and their constitution. Asch proposed a social influence without a real interaction; his method had developed from a point of view more individualist than interactionist groups. It focused on a group rather than the group processes itself, and his experiences were initially from groups that were not really (Ibid).

The conformism is relatively automatic and an early process and the relying on the social norms may be a quick heuristic strategy (Wood, 2000). The Individuals tend to conform for following the positive sense of the self-presentation to others, while being unconscious of having done so (Miller, 1976). The effect of a false consensus shows that everyone tends to believe that others would have acted or thought like him, because cheating on the exam is an automatic process that increases once belongs to an in-group where the cheating reigns ( Allport, 1935).

Moscovici proposes that the attachment to the conformity is a form of a majority's tyranny. Nevertheless, the particularity of an obstinate minority is to get others think in an innovatively

way about their positions. For Moscovici; if the creation and innovation's values are valued in a group, it is the norm of the originality that prevails it. There is a norm of the objectivity and another of the preference that comes as it is about judging, influencing or informing. Moscovici draws up a five styles of behavior that their influence remains incomprehensible, nevertheless, they remain influential (S. Moscovici, 1979).

- The Investment: The effort provided changes the behavior; and with a free choice engages the person towards a high esteem.
- The Autonomy: a value that when had manifested, it elicits a positive reactions.
- Consistency: it is like a certainty's index, it is a decision affirmation of a stick steadfastly to a given point of view.
- Rigidity: a rigid behavior could be a form of the influence as it could be sometimes an obstacle.
- Equity: the subject has a certain solidity that is close to the consistency, but expresses at the same time a concern to taking into account the position of others. The game remains open until a certain point. Fairness means exactly the simultaneous expression of a particular point of view and the concern of the reciprocity of the relation in which the opinions are expressed.

The theory of the social impact assumes that all styles of influence is resulted from the same factors (Latané, 1981). Indeed, the social influence is the result of number, strength and the proximity of influence's sources (Kurt Lewin). The characteristics of the group's dynamic resulted from spatially close individuals that influence each other for:

- The consolidation of the group.
- The concordance of the subgroup's opinions.
- The correlations of opinions within subgroups.
- The Enhancing diversity by protecting the minorities within subgroups. (Latané, 1981).

The minorities influences the information (the motivation of understanding) and the norms (motivation of belonging). Indeed, the influence of the minorities is strangely indirect, and it works as if the members of the majority did not want to admit that the minority could change their opinions, but the self-esteem of the people suffers when they find themselves associated with a derogated minority (ST Fiske, 2004) and end up by changing their minds accordingly. The minority's influence takes place over the long term and target especially the motivation of understanding, and it is sociocognitive and no longer socio-identity (Perez, Mugny, 1989).

The norms reduces the uncertainty in ambiguous situations thus creating a subjective validity that will ensure what is adequate, correct and desirable. However, in which extent does the social reality correspond to the subjective reality?

The theory of the social identity considers that the opposition between a normative and an informational influence is only a false dichotomy as long as the basic motivations, belonging and

comprehension constitute the construction's cause of a social reality within group. So what is subjective and what is the objective in this context?

The Milgram's experience at Yale University is the most famous in the terms of the submission to the authority. It is to be putting in the frame of: the social forces. (S.T. Fiske, 2004).

Milgram (1974) had recruited subjects from all segments of the American population and compensated a (\$ 4.5) to participate in an experiment on the memory and the learning. Each subjects becomes, in the experiment, a monitor to teach a student (a comedian) a list of pairs of words. "The experimenter explains to the instructor that, in order to study the effects of the punishment on the learning, it must, in every student's error, administer him an electric discharge of increasing intensity, from 15 to 450 volts.

The monitor is unaware that the student is receiving a false discharge and that the increasing complaints to the agony's cries are simulated.

The real object of the experiment is to determine in which moment the monitor will refuse to obey the experimenter towards when he feels engaged and imperturbably, orders him to continue the experiment (F. Petit, M. Dubois, 2013).

The experimenter with a white collar and a badge constantly imposes the monitor to continue, that the experience requires continuing, that it is essential to keep up and that he has no choice, he must continue.

Sixty-five percent of the monitors went up to 450 V and 35% resisted keep on to the end, that what will calling for the question of the presence or absence of the experimenter, the fact of hearing the shouting or not. When the authority is near, its orders are influential and when the victim is near, his suffering is influential as well.

What is about when we are talking about the importance of the presence or absence of the experimenter? Can we say that it is a laboratory experiment?

Zimbardo repeated the same experience in prison, and "Langer" in a retirement home, but did they understand the roots of suffering?

What are the implications of this experience which has been the subject of much discussions and which refers to the importance of status and position in a hierarchy? How power could influence others, or, what is mean by having influence as a power?

There are five forms of power according the social psychologists (J.R.P. French, B. Raven, 1959)

It should be noted that without perception there is no power, and this one is conceded to the other, by that one which we has the least, and which is ironically very often ignored by researchers (Depret, Fiske, 1993).

For the rewarding power, the individuals preoccupied of those who can influence their results, but those who have power, are less concerned with those who depend on them. The Power holders are joyful and focus on the benefits and freedom of behavior and in most cases have an automatic cognitive functioning. Those with less power inhibit their negative emotions and have a concentration on what threatens them. They exhibit a constrained behavior and a great cognitive

control. According the theory of the metamorphic effects: the power corrupts the relationships. The subordinates therefore have no personal merit and believe that the leader has a reference and an expertise power (Rahim et al, 2001).

The Coercive power implies a control implicitly negative (Hollander, 1985), works only in a short term, and subordinates can following the orders under duress, but do not appreciate and respect their leaders and have in addition to that, impression that they have the right to punish others and that it must never lower the guard.

The power of reference predicts the commitment, the attitudes conforming, and the satisfaction of the subordinates (Carson, Roe, 1993, Rahim, Afza, 1993). This power could be a part of the in-group's identification where the members who have left and returned to it are perceived as less loyal and less value, even if they are highly involved and knowledgeable and have a great expertise, so they are less influential.

The power of expertise provides that the expert have an authority that confers the knowledge, and the power of legitimacy has a link with the expectation States Theory that predicts that the individuals develop the attitudes of competence of other group members in the status's function, gender, and age (Berger, Webster, Ridgway, 2001).

The Acquiescence is a social influence following a request from a peer. Indeed, the explanation of the social influence in the perception terms of self as coherent manifests itself in several forms:

The coherence it is the fact of perceiving congruently compared to its past behavior.

The Self-perception refers to the (Daryl, Bem, 1967) theory, which affirm that what we are learning about oneself we observes it act.

A person, who behaves in an accordance way with those previous behaviors, will eventually adopt these same behaviors in an isolated context, and the acquiescence functions in the same way.

Freedman and Fraser (1966) had proposed the foot-in-the-door (PDP) technique, which is implied by a basic postulate that individuals infer their attitudes based on their behavior at the first request, and acts at the second, in accordance with these attitudes, this suggests three hypotheses:

A PDP effect is more important when the individuals are involved in the initial request.

A PDP effect is more important when individuals have to provide a behavior to respond to the first request.

A PDP effect is less important from the moment where the initial demand is so strong that individuals refuse. (Burger, 1991)

According to the theory of the commitment, the commitment is an act that commits us. Indeed, only our actions engages us in a varying degree depending on the circumstances, and not attitudes and beliefs. Indeed, the beliefs leads individuals to behave in a different ways, because a current

behavior is to be considered as the consequence of an initial behavior. This means that an act could be a generator's activities and a cognitive change, have new behaviors. This generative character is the object of the commitment theory, which can be characterized by its engagement conditions and its engagement effects and by the freely agreed-upon submission techniques presented below:

In addition to the technique of "foot in the door", the priming is to get someone to make a decision where he does not know the negative implications, then letting him know it and ask him if he still maintains his decision or not .

The lure: the principle here is to bring an individual to make a decision to emit a behavior where he expects certain benefits, then teach him that this behavior is not possible, but offering him a substitution behavior that does not present the same benefits.

"The door in the nose": the plaintiff seems taking a step back, which may make the target guilty.

## **Conclusion**

The theory of the commitment is a response to the dissonance cognitive theory where, the subject diminishes his internal dissonance by a freely and solemnly engagement. However, this same subject does not trait the information, he is in the action, he often does what he is asked for, and this action provokes the knowledge and new behaviors.

Either the individual had often led to maintain his freedom by trying to control the resources, either by reactance, or by the conservation of a social capital or by attraction that requires among other things a certain similarity (P. Salhani, 2009).

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