"Monkey See, Monkey Do": A Social Quasi-Experiment on Conformity

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ABSTRACT

Social Conformity is the process by which individuals adjust their behavior, attitudes, or decisions to align with perceived group expectations. Conformity often occurs without direct commands or explicit pressure. This study was conducted to examine the influence of observed group behavior on individual conformity across three levels of behavioral intensity: common, atypical, and extreme. Utilizing a within-subjects experimental design, the study evaluated a convenience sample of ten university students (N=10) aged 18 to 21. Participants were exposed to all three experimental conditions, wherein embedded associated modeled scripted behaviors including signing a blank sheet, shouting loudly, or tearing an exam paper. Descriptive data indicated a 100% conformity rate for both common and atypical behaviors, which decreased to 70% under the extreme behavior condition. Inferential analysis yielded mixed results; while a repeated-measures Cochran's Q test demonstrated that conformity rates remained statistically uniform across intensity levels, $Q \approx 0$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$, a Chi-square goodness-of-fit test revealed a significant difference in the distribution of responses, $\chi^2 (2, N = 27) = 0.67$, $p = .72$, Cramer's $V = .11$ indicates a very small effect size. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that observing group behavior exerts a robust influence on individual action, expanding the empirical evidence of social conformity from cognitive judgments to direct behavioral imitation. Although peer influence functions as a highly powerful determinant of human behavior, individual autonomy is slightly more likely to be maintained as the observed group actions escalate into unconventional or destructive extremes.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever found yourself doing something simply because everyone else was doing it?

Perhaps you stood up because the people around you stood up, laughed because everyone else was laughing, or followed a behavior that you would never normally do on your own. In moments like these, it is easy to believe that our actions are products of independent thought. However, psychology suggests that human behavior is often shaped not only by personal choice, but also by the influence of those around us.

This tendency can be observed throughout both nature and human society. Flocks of birds move in near-perfect synchronization, schools of fish change direction as one, and colonies of ants follow collective patterns without centralized control. Such behaviors are often described as herd behavior—the tendency of individuals to align their actions with those of a larger group. While humans possess higher reasoning and individual autonomy, they are not immune to similar social influences.

Within psychology, this phenomenon is known as **social conformity**, the process by which individuals adjust their behavior, attitudes, or decisions to align with perceived group expectations. Conformity often occurs without direct commands or explicit pressure. Instead, individuals may look to others for cues on how to behave, especially in situations where social norms are unclear. The desire for acceptance, belongingness, and avoidance of social rejection can become powerful forces that shape behavior.

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One of the most influential demonstrations of this phenomenon was conducted by Solomon Asch (1951). In his classic conformity experiments, participants were placed among confederates who intentionally provided incorrect answers to an obvious task. Despite knowing the correct answer, many participants conformed to the group's judgment rather than trusting their own perceptions. These findings revealed that the influence of a group can be powerful enough to alter individual behavior, even when the correct course of action appears evident.

Although conformity has been extensively studied, much of the existing research focuses on opinions, judgments, and decision-making tasks. Comparatively fewer studies examine how conformity influences the imitation of observable behaviors in real-life situations. More importantly, limited research has explored whether the intensity of an observed behavior affects an individual's willingness to conform. While people may readily imitate common and socially acceptable actions, it remains unclear whether they will continue to follow the group when behaviors become unusual, inappropriate, or even extreme.

This raises an important question: Does observing the behavior of others truly influence our own behavior, and if so, how far are individuals willing to go in following the crowd?

To address this gap, the present study, Monkey See, Monkey Do, investigates the influence of observed group behavior on individual conformity. Specifically, the study examines whether participants will imitate behaviors demonstrated by a group across three levels of behavioral intensity: common, moderate, and extreme. By comparing conformity across these conditions, the study seeks to determine not only whether observed behavior influences individual action, but also whether the likelihood of conformity changes as the demonstrated behavior becomes increasingly unconventional.

Ultimately, this research aims to deepen our understanding of social influence by examining the boundaries of conformity. When faced with the choice between personal judgment and group behavior, do individuals remain independent, or do they follow the crowd—and does that willingness change depending on how extreme the behavior becomes?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study hold significance in understanding how social influence shapes human behavior. While people often view their actions as products of independent choice, conformity research suggests that behavior can be strongly affected by the actions of others. By examining conformity across common, moderate, and extreme behavioral conditions, this study provides insight into the extent to which observed behavior influences individual actions and whether the intensity of a behavior affects the likelihood of imitation.

For the Field of Psychology

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social conformity by extending the discussion beyond opinions and judgments to observable behaviors. While classic studies such as Asch’s demonstrated conformity in decision-making, this research explores whether individuals will imitate actions they witness in real-life situations and how conformity changes as behaviors become increasingly unconventional. The findings may strengthen existing theories of social influence, normative social influence, and behavioral imitation.

For Educational Institutions

Educational institutions constantly operate within social environments where students are influenced by peers. Understanding how conformity functions can help schools and universities recognize how behaviors spread within groups, whether positive or negative. The findings may assist institutions in developing programs that promote healthy peer influence and encourage students to make informed decisions rather than blindly following group behavior.

For Educators

Teachers frequently observe students adopting the behaviors of their classmates. This study may provide educators with a deeper understanding of how peer influence affects classroom behavior, participation, and

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decision-making. By understanding the mechanisms of conformity, educators can create learning environments that encourage critical thinking, individuality, and responsible social interaction.

For Individuals and Society

In everyday life, people are constantly exposed to social pressures, whether through friends, family, communities, or social media. This study highlights how easily behavior can be shaped by simply observing others. Understanding this process can help individuals become more aware of situations where they may be conforming without conscious reflection. On a broader level, the study emphasizes the importance of balancing social belonging with personal judgment, especially in situations where following the crowd may lead to harmful or irrational actions.

For Researchers

The study provides additional empirical evidence regarding the relationship between observed behavior and conformity. By incorporating varying levels of behavioral intensity, it offers a different perspective on how social influence operates in naturalistic settings. The findings may contribute to future discussions on behavioral imitation, group dynamics, and social psychology.

For Future Researchers

This research may serve as a foundation for future studies investigating conformity under different contexts, populations, and social conditions. Future researchers may explore how factors such as age, personality, cultural background, group size, or authority figures influence conformity. They may also examine whether conformity patterns differ in online environments, where social influence is increasingly mediated through digital platforms.

Overall

This study seeks to deepen our understanding of a simple but powerful psychological phenomenon: the tendency to follow what others do. By examining conformity across behaviors of varying intensity, it explores not only whether observed behavior influences our own actions, but also how far that influence can extend. Ultimately, the study highlights that human behavior is shaped not only by individual choice, but also by the social environments in which those choices are made.

Research Problem / Gap

Social conformity has been extensively studied within psychology, particularly in relation to judgments, opinions, and decision-making. However, much of the existing literature focuses on situations where individuals are asked to agree or disagree with a group. Comparatively fewer studies investigate how people respond when conformity involves directly imitating observable behaviors.

Furthermore, limited research examines whether the likelihood of conformity changes as observed behaviors become increasingly unusual or socially inappropriate. While individuals may readily imitate common behaviors, it remains uncertain whether this tendency persists when behaviors become moderate or extreme.

This creates an important research gap: Does the intensity of an observed behavior influence an individual's willingness to conform, or are people equally susceptible to imitation regardless of how unusual the behavior appears?

Social conformity is one of the most widely studied concepts in psychology, particularly in understanding how group influence affects individual behavior. Classic studies, such as those conducted by Solomon Asch, demonstrated that individuals may alter their judgments to align with a majority, even when the correct answer is obvious. However, much of the existing research focuses on conformity in opinions, perceptions, and decision-making tasks rather than the imitation of observable behaviors.

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Furthermore, while previous studies have established that people tend to conform to group norms, fewer studies have examined whether the intensity of a behavior affects the likelihood of conformity. It remains unclear whether individuals are equally willing to imitate behaviors that are common and socially acceptable, moderately unusual, or highly extreme. Most research investigates whether conformity occurs, but not how conformity changes as the observed behavior becomes increasingly unconventional.

This creates an important gap in the literature: **Does merely observing a behavior influence individual to perform that same behavior themselves, and does the level of behavioral intensity affect the degree of conformity?** By examining conformity across common, moderate, and extreme behavioral conditions, this study seeks to better understand the limits of social influence and determine how far individuals are willing to follow the actions of a group.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question

Human behavior is often shaped by the people around us, but to what extent does observation truly influence action?

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

Does observing the behavior of others influence an individual's own behavior?

To what extent does observing group behavior affect an individual's likelihood of conforming, and does the level of conformity differ when the observed behavior is common, atypical, or extreme?

Hypotheses

To address the research questions regarding the extent and boundaries of social influence, the present study tests two distinct pairs of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The Influence of Observed Behavior

The first pair of hypotheses examines the overall effect of social modeling on individual action, determining whether the presence of a group behavior elicits imitation.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Observing the behavior of others does not significantly influence an individual's own behavior. Participants will display no statistically significant tendency to imitate or conform to the demonstrated group behaviors.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Observing the behavior of others significantly influences an individual's own behavior. Participants will display a statistically significant tendency to imitate or conform to the demonstrated group behaviors.

Hypothesis 2: The Effect of Behavioral Intensity

The second pair of hypotheses examine the boundaries of social conformity, determining whether an individual's willingness to conform changes as the observed behavior escalates in severity.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): The intensity of the observed behavior does not significantly affect the likelihood of conformity. Participants' levels of imitation will remain statistically uniform across the common, atypical, and extreme behavioral conditions.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): The intensity of the observed behavior significantly affects the likelihood of conformity. Participants' levels of imitation will vary significantly across the common, atypical, and extreme

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behavioral conditions, indicating that the likelihood of conformity changes as the demonstrated behavior becomes increasingly unconventional.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the core of this study lies the understanding that human behavior is not merely the product of isolated individual decision-making, but is continuously shaped by the social environment in which individuals are embedded. While traditional perspectives often emphasize autonomy in judgment, this framework shifts the focus toward a more interactional principle: individuals frequently adjust their behavior, consciously or unconsciously, in response to perceived social cues, group norms, and situational pressure.

Social Conformity Theory (Asch, 1951)

Consequently, this study is primarily anchored in Social Conformity Theory, as demonstrated in the seminal experiments of Solomon Asch (1951). This theory proposes that individuals may alter their judgments or behaviors to align with a majority group, even when such alignment conflicts with their private perceptions. Asch's findings highlight that the need for social acceptance and fear of exclusion can significantly influence decision-making, often leading individuals to conform to incorrect or misleading group responses. Within this framework, conformity is understood as a powerful social force that can override independent judgment under group pressure.

Supporting this foundation is the dual-process model of Normative and Informational Social Influence proposed by Deutsch and Gerard (1955). Normative social influence occurs when individuals conform to gain social approval or avoid rejection, whereas informational social influence arises when individuals look to others for guidance in ambiguous or uncertain situations. In the context of this study, both mechanisms help explain why participants may imitate group behavior—either to maintain social belonging or to reduce uncertainty when interpreting a situation.

Further reinforcing this framework is the Chameleon Effect, introduced by Chartrand and Bargh (1999). This theory suggests that individuals unconsciously mimic the gestures, postures, and behaviors of others during social interaction. Unlike deliberate conformity, this form of imitation occurs automatically and often without awareness. It functions as a social "glue," facilitating rapport and interpersonal connection. In this study, the Chameleon Effect provides a mechanism for explaining spontaneous behavioral imitation in the absence of explicit social pressure.

Additionally, this study is informed by Social Impact Theory, developed by Bibb Latané (1981). The theory posits that social influence is a function of three key variables: strength, immediacy, and the number of influencing sources. Influence increases when multiple individuals simultaneously display the same behavior, are physically or psychologically close to the observer, and are perceived as socially significant. In this study, the presence of multiple confederates exhibiting identical behaviors increases the overall social force exerted on the participant, thereby strengthening the likelihood of conformity.

Finally, the study draws conceptual support from Stanley Milgram's (1963) research on obedience. Although Milgram's work primarily focused on authority-driven compliance rather than peer conformity, it demonstrates the broader principle that human behavior is highly responsive to social context. His findings illustrate that individuals may act against personal moral judgment when placed under structured social pressure, reinforcing the idea that situational forces can strongly shape behavior even in the presence of internal resistance.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of conformity as a multi-layered social phenomenon. Rather than being driven by a single mechanism, conformity emerges from the interaction of conscious social evaluation, unconscious imitation, situational pressure, and the fundamental human need for acceptance and coherence within a group. Through this integrated framework, Monkey See, Monkey Do examines how and why individuals adjust their behavior in response to group influence, even when such behaviors may conflict with their private judgments.

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Definition of Terms

The following terms and variables are operationally defined based on their specific use and measurement within this study:

Apprentices (Co-participants): Trained researchers who disguised themselves as fellow students, displaying scripted behaviors (common, moderate/atypical, and extreme) intended to be observed by the actual participants.

Behavioral Intensity (Level of Observed Group Behavior): The independent variable manipulated in this study, categorized into three distinct levels of demonstrated actions: common, moderate (atypical), and extreme.

Common Behavior: The baseline level of the independent variable, operationally defined as the co-participants uniformly standing and lining up to sign a blank sheet of paper before commencing the mock test.

Conformity (Social Conformity): The dependent variable of the study, operationally measured dichotomously. It was scored as a 1 if the participant successfully imitated the observed action of the apprentices, or a 0 if the action was not performed, summed across each condition.

Extreme Behavior: The highest level of the independent variable, operationally defined as the co-participants tearing their test paper in two before handing it to the proctor.

Mock Test: A decoy task utilized to maintain the study's cover story, providing a credible reason for participants to be in the room and allowing the behavioral interventions to be introduced naturally.

Moderate/Atypical Behavior: The intermediate level of the independent variable, operationally defined as the co-participants loudly yelling “DONE!” in an unexpected and unusual manner after completing the mock test.

Method

The responses produced from the experiment were sorted into organized answers. Once data collection has been completed, the recordings of the participants’ observed behaviour were gathered, stored, and secured to ensure confidentiality. Afterwards, the documented information was transferred into a digital layout for consistency and accuracy. The acquired data is now prepared for statistical analysis in order to efficiently process and provide a clear interpretation of the results.

To summarize the results, the behaviour of each participant in all three conditions were analyzed. The respondents went through all 3 treatments (common, atypical, and extreme) and each condition was dichotomously coded as 1 (action was performed) or 0 (action was not performed). The scores are summed for each condition to identify the total responses of the participants per condition.

Design

This study examined whether observing the behavior of others influences a person’s tendency to conform and whether the level of conformity changes as the behavior becomes more unusual. The experiment used a within-subjects design, where all participants experienced the three behavioral conditions: common, atypical, and extreme.

The Independent Variable (IV) was the level of observed group behavior. This was operationally defined through three behaviors demonstrated by the researchers. In the common behavior condition, the researchers stood up and lined up to sign a blank sheet of paper. In the moderate behavior condition, the researchers loudly shouted “DONE!” after finishing the test. In the extreme behavior condition, the researchers tore their answer sheets before submitting intensity.

The Dependent Variable (DV) was behavioral conformity, this was operationally defined as whether the participant copied the behavior demonstrated by the researchers in each condition. A score of 1 was recorded if the participant performed the behavior, while a score of 0 was recorded if the participant did not perform the

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behavior. These responses were used to determine the participant's level of conformity across the three conditions.

Participants

A total of ten participants (N = 10) were selected for this study, consisting of individuals within the age range of 18 to 23 years. This approach integrated convenience sampling to account for participant availability and accessibility within the university setting. The inclusion criteria required all participants to be currently enrolled students at National University-Fairview. Adhering to ethical research protocols, participation was strictly voluntary, and all individuals were informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Before data collection, formal informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure they were fully aware of the research objectives and data privacy measures.

Materials

The researchers used the same materials for the experimental and control groups. Most of the materials were sourced from local stationery stores for affordability and efficiency, while the electronic devices were personally provided by the researchers.

Tools

These are the items used to set up the experimental environment and serve as a token of appreciation for the participants:

i. Tripod
ii. Five (5) standard ballpoint pens
iii. Ten (10) ballpoint pens (tokens for participants)

Instruments

The following are the instruments utilized to record the participants' behavior as well as display the video instructions:

i. Smartphone camera
ii. Laptop

Stimuli

The researchers used the following to create the stimulus and facilitate the experimental conditions:

i. A video instruction presentation made through Canva (used to ensure the testing environment was maintained in complete silence)

Questionnaires and Forms

These are the items used to quantify the answers of the participants, secure permissions, and verify presence:

i. Ten (10) custom answer sheets for the pretend exam
ii. Ten (10) informed consent forms
iii. One (1) attendance sheet

Software

The following softwares are used to organize data, present instructions, and apply statistical treatment for the

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interpretation of results:

i. Canva
ii. Google Docs
iii. Google Sheets
iv. Microsoft Excel
v. Jamovi

Procedure

The participants were selected using the convenience sampling method, where 2 Participant Handlers were tasked to search for available participants across multiple floors of the NU Fairview Campus. They were asked to participate in a quick study and were led by the handlers to the campus' Learning Resource Center (LRC). The participant is then told to line up outside one of the LRC study rooms along with 4 researchers disguised as co-participants. The co-participants along with the real participant are let into the room by the head researcher, where they are briefed with a decoy presentation unrelated to the real experiment. The participants are instructed to sit and answer a mock test, but before doing so and without instruction from the head researcher, the acting participants uniformly stand and line up at the front of the room to sign a blank sheet of paper. This represents the Common Behavior Stage, where a harmless social action is influenced by the majority.

After observing the Common Behavior Stage. The participants are given a mock test to answer, which after answering, the co-participants would loudly yell "DONE!" in an unexpected and unusual manner. This represented the Moderate Behaviour Stage, where an individual may be influenced by the group into an unusual action. Finally, the participants would be told to line up and pass their paper to the proctors. Before doing so, the co-participants would tear their paper in two before handing it to the proctor. This represented the Extreme Behavior Stage, where an individual may be pushed onto harmful or destructive tendencies by the group's behavior. The participants' behavior and responses to the 3 stimuli are recorded by a researcher in the room on paper, and the real participant is told to stay in the room while the co-participants exited to give way for the head researcher's debriefing

RESULTS

The results of the experiment were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were first examined to summarize the conformity response of participants across the three (3) behavior types.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of conformity rates across the given behavior types. As shown, all participants conformed to the common (100%) and atypical behaviors (100%), whereas slightly few

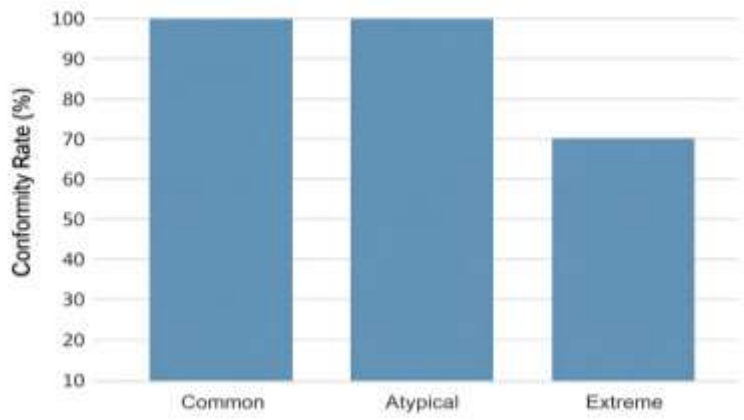

Figure 1. Conformity Rates Across Behavior Types

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Frequencies and percentages indicated that 10 participants conformed to the common behavior, 10 to the atypical behavior, and 7 to the extreme behavior. Descriptive statistics summarized in Table 1.

Behavior Type	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Common	10	100 %
Behavior	10	100 %
Extreme	7	70%

Table 1. Frequencies of Conformity by Behavior Type

Cochran's Q test was conducted to determine whether conformity rates vary across the three behavior types (common, atypical, and extreme). The test yielded that it was not statistically significant, $\mathbf{Q \approx 0, df = 2, p > 0.05}$, further indicating that conformity rates remained stable across conditions when considering the repeated-measures nature of the data.

On the other hand, to determine whether the distribution of categorical responses deviates from what would be expected, Chi-square test was also $\mathbf{\chi^2(2, N = 27) = 0.67, p = .72,}$ the findings suggest that conformity was highest and equivalent for common and atypical behaviors (100%), whereas extreme behaviors elicited a marginally lower conformity rate (70%), indicating that responses were not evenly distributed across the three conditions.

To evaluate the strength of this association, Cramer's V was calculated. The effect size estimate **(V = .11)** fell within the very small range, implying a small effect of behavior type on conformity.

Collectively, the results suggest that conformity consistently remained high across all behavior types. However, the statistical analyses yielded mixed evidence as to whether the modest decrease in conformity observed for extreme behaviors constituted a statistically reliable difference.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the experiment is to further understand social influence by the boundaries of conformity, specifically through the responses of the participants to common, atypical, and extreme behaviors. The findings suggest that even though the participants responded to the observed behavior, the 3 conditions did not influence the likelihood of the participant in doing the action. Given that the experiment has four (4) hypotheses, the researchers utilized two statistical tests: Cochran's Q and Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test.

Cochran's Q was used to analyze the non-parametric data that was collected from the same set of participants across three conditions. With a result of $\mathbf{Q \approx 0,\ df = 2,\ p > 0.05}$, the test shows that there is no significant difference with the participant's response between the common, atypical, and extreme conditions. This statistically confirmed that the researchers had failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) 2, which predicts that the intensity of the observed behavior does not significantly affect the likelihood of conformity, in line with this the participants' levels of imitation will remain statistically uniform across the common, atypical, and extreme behavioral conditions.

As a point of comparison, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted under the assumption that the frequencies represented independent counts. Results showed no significant departure from a uniform distribution, $\mathbf{\chi^2(2, N = 27) = 0.67, p = .72,}$ indicating little to no differences in conformity responses across the three behavior types. More specifically, full conformity was observed for common and atypical behaviors (100%), compared to a slightly lower rate for extreme behaviors (70 %). The results show that the null hypothesis (H_1) 1 has failed to be rejected, meaning that observing the behavior of others does not significantly influence

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an individual's own behavior. Taken together, participants demonstrated a strong tendency to conform to majority behaviors, and despite a slight reduction in conformity for extreme behaviors, the results demonstrated that social influence played a substantial role in shaping the behavior of the participants.

Furthermore, a result of **(V = .11)** shows that the strength of the association falls within the very small range. This small effect size implies that despite not having a statistically significant difference between the conditions, there is still a relevance in terms of the variation of the common, atypical, and extreme conditions. This suggests that behavior of the participants presented a small yet noticeable effect in shaping the individuals' choices.

The findings may be accounted for by the Social Conformity Theory (Asch, 1951) which proposes that people try to conform to a majority group. High conformity rates in all three conditions suggest a strong influence of co-participants on the participants. Similarly, the Social Impact Theory by Latané (1981) suggests that greater numbers of people displaying similar behaviors will lead to greater social impact, resulting in higher conformity. The results could also be an illustration of the Chameleon Impact, which leads to people unconsciously imitating others without particular directions or stress.

The results agree with the classic conformity results of Asch that showed that people conform to group behavior even though they are free to do so. As in previous conformity studies, there was a clear tendency to conform in the present study. This study, however, involved observable behavioural imitation, rather than many earlier studies that dealt with judgements and decision-making tasks, thus providing further evidence that conformity goes beyond opinions and perceptions to everyday behavior.

There are some caveats that should be taken into account when interpreting these findings. First, the study only included 10 participants, and the results may not be generalizable. Second, because it was a convenience sample, participants were drawn from one university, and the results cannot be generalized to other groups. Last but not least, a controlled experimental context may not be fully representative of the context of conformity in the real world.

Larger and more diverse samples of children should be used in future studies to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Other factors that can be investigated include cultural differences, age, personality, and group size, in order to gain further insights into conformity. In addition, future studies might explore conformity in online settings, where social influence is now more largely expressed via social media and digital communication.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in strict adherence to the ethical principles for psychological research, ensuring the protection of all participants' rights and welfare. The following measures were implemented to address key ethical concerns:

Informed Consent. Before participating, each respondent was provided with a consent form that clearly described the study's general procedures, the nature of the tasks that would involve a simple test, such as "How room temperature affects students' test scores.",This allowed them to agree under the impression of answering straightforward questions, which helped preserve the natural responses we wanted to observe. It was explicitly stated that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. However, to preserve the integrity of the experimental manipulation, the true purpose of the study and the specific nature of the deceptive part were not disclosed at this stage. This partial disclosure was approved by the relevant ethics review board, as it was deemed necessary to prevent demand characteristics and obtain unbiased responses.

Confidentiality. All data collected were anonymized and kept strictly confidential. Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for research purposes and that no identifying information would appear in any publication or presentation resulting from this study. Data was stored securely and accessible only to the research team.

Voluntariness. The principle of voluntary participation was upheld throughout the study. Students from NU Fairview across different courses were politely approached by the researchers and asked if they were free and

willing to participate, with clear assurance that their involvement was entirely optional. The informed consent form emphasized that participants could decline participation or withdraw consent at any point without providing a reason and without facing any negative consequences. No pressure or incentives were offered that could coerce participation, and participants were told there would be no harm or negative impact if they chose not to take part. This ensured that all involvement was based on free and informed choice.

Use of Deception. The experiment involved a deception. They were told the true aims of the study, and the role of the apprentices was explained, Apprentices pretended to be fellow students who joined the activity, and they displayed common (writing their names in a paper), atypical (shouting "done"), and extreme (ripping paper) behaviors. This setup allowed us to observe whether participants would imitate these behaviors. The deception was minimal, carefully justified, and did not cause harm. Any misconceptions were clarified, and the use of deception was fully disclosed. This ensured that participants left with a clear understanding of the research and its purpose.

Debriefing. A thorough debriefing was conducted with all participants (one by one) immediately after their participation concluded. During this process, the researcher:

1. **Explained the Deception**: Fully disclosed the true purpose of the study and clarified that the "fellow students" in the activity were actually trained apprentices and that their behaviors like writing their name quietly, suddenly shouting "done," and ripping the paper were scripted, not genuine student actions.

2. **Revealed the Hypothesis**: Explained that the experiment was designed to see the effect, whether participants would imitate common, atypical, or extreme behaviors modeled by others, even when those actions weren't required by the task.

3. **Provided a "Dehoaxing" Explanation**: Clarified the scientific rationale for the deception, emphasizing that it was essential to get natural, unbiased responses and that their participation was valuable.

4. **Offered a "Desensitization" Reassurance**: Reassured participants that their responses were normal and that the deception was a standard methodological tool, with the goal of leaving them with a positive understanding of the research process.

Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions and to request the removal of their data from the study if they wished. Contact information for the research team and the supervising ethics board was provided for any future concerns.

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