

Redesign of Solomon Asch's Social Conformity Experiment on Online Platform

Sahla Sherin K^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The current study checked the validity of social conformity experiment on online platform, influence of group size and gender in social conformity. Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment redesigned among 100 early young adults in the age range of 18 to 25, who are living both in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. The 100 participants are divided into 4 groups: Group 1, Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4 of 10, 15, 30 and 45 participants in each groups respectively. A set of 12 trials each consists of 4 lines as directly adopted from Solomon Asch's original experiment to collect the data used. Solomon Asch's Social conformity experiment is redesigned in online platform (WhatsApp) to check the validity and influence of group size and gender in social conformity. In the present study, the social conformity is based on the responses given by confederates. Correlation and independent sample t test are used for data analyses. The study found that the significance difference between gender and social conformity and correlation between group size and social conformity.

Keywords: *Social Conformity, Gender, Group Size*

Certainly, you're not alone if you remember middle and high school as challenging periods in your life. During this time, social pressure from peers, as discussed by Brown in 1982, was a constant, and popularity often hinged on understanding and adhering to unspoken rules. Yet, even in adulthood, social roles continue to shape us. When adults gather, it's common for them to inquire about each other's occupations as a way to identify individuals and form initial impressions. Occasionally, we may feel the strain of juggling multiple or conflicting social roles, which can be especially pertinent for women, as discussed by Arthur and Lee in 2008. Nonetheless, our deeper commitments to specific roles such as being a parent, employee, partner, or friend represent a form of social influence that stabilizes society. In essence, we become the components that keep societies functioning smoothly. The research checking the validity of social conformity experiment on online platform and knowing the influence of gender and group size in social conformity. The term 'conformity' means compliance with standards, rules or laws. Social conformity is a type of social influence in which individuals change their attitudes or behavior in order to adhere to existing social norms. Social norms are rules indicating how individuals ought to behave in specific situations. Descriptive norms tell us what most people do in a given situation; they inform us about what is generally seen as appropriate or adaptive behavior in that situation.

¹Assistant Professor, Al Shifa College of Arts and Science, Kerala, India

*Corresponding Author

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In contrast, injunctive norms specify what should (should not) be done, not merely what most people do. Before entering into social conformity, it would be better to explain social influence. Social influence encompasses the way our thoughts, emotions, and actions are shaped by our interactions within our social environment. This includes our inclination to conform to group norms, adhere to societal conventions, and obey authoritative figures. Social influence can be categorized into two primary types: implicit expectations and explicit expectations. Implicit expectations refer to the unwritten rules within a social context, akin to the unspoken guidelines that exist during middle school. These rules are enforced through the collective norms of a group. For instance, it's understood without explicit instruction that you would likely dress differently when attending a formal religious event compared to going to a retro grunge rock concert. Implicit expectations can be further categorized into two types. The first type is conformity, which occurs when individuals voluntarily change their behavior to mimic the actions of their peers. For example, years down the line, you might look at a current picture of yourself and wonder why you made fashion choices that seem questionable now. However, at the time, you were likely dressing similarly to everyone else around you. The second form of implicit social influence arises from social roles, which involve expectations from a group regarding how specific individuals are expected to appear and behave. We collectively hold stereotypes about how elementary school teachers, rock musicians, clergy members, and presidential candidates should interact with the public. These expectations are implicit because, although everyone is aware of these unwritten "rules," they aren't necessarily documented or formalized. In contrast to implicit expectations, explicit expectations are clear and formally expressed, lacking subtlety. There are also two forms of explicit expectations: compliance and obedience. Compliance occurs when individuals act in response to a direct or indirect request. For instance, when healthy graduate students asked people on a New York City subway to give up their seats, about two-thirds of the subway riders complied simply because they were asked. With compliance, there isn't necessarily a threat of punishment for not complying; it's a request rather than a demand. On the other hand, obedience occurs when individuals behave in a particular manner because someone of higher status has ordered them to do so. This could be a boss at work, a parent, or a professor at school. In any case, the expectation is clearly articulated and often accompanied by the possibility of social consequences if one fails to obey. In general, obedience can be seen as a more extreme form of compliance. Let's move to social conformity, mechanisms, influencing factors, experiments on it etc., Imagine attending an unfamiliar religious ceremony with a friend, feeling a bit anxious. You start observing how others in the gathering are behaving. If you notice that they are removing their shoes, you'll likely do the same. Similarly, if you see them kneeling, sitting, or standing, you're likely to follow suit. Most of us engage in these actions because we (1) are uncertain about the correct conduct in that setting and (2) feel a sense of unease about fitting in. These two concerns help clarify the theory of informational and normative influence, which explains how social norms lead to conformity through two mechanisms: informational conformity and normative conformity (as described by Deutsch & Gerard in 1955 and 1972). Informational social influence occurs when individuals seek trustworthy information from peers in their community. There are three situations that make people more likely to rely on informational social influence: When they face uncertainty in unclear situations, they are more inclined to turn to others for guidance. When exposed to informational social influence, it often results in internalization or genuine belief in the information's accuracy. The initial research on this phenomenon was carried out by Muzafer Sherif using an autokinetic device. In 1935, Sherif conducted a laboratory experiment to investigate compliance. He utilized the auto-kinetic effect, where a small point of light appears to move even when it is stationary, creating an optical illusion. When participants made estimations individually in a dark environment, their judgments regarding how far the light

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appeared to move varied significantly. Following this, participants were organized into three-person groups. Sherif designed these groups by pairing two individuals who had very similar individual estimates of the light's movement with one individual whose estimate was notably different. Each group member had to verbally state their perception of the distance the light had travelled. Sherif observed that, over several trials, the group eventually converged on a shared estimation of the light's motion. The group member with the initially divergent estimate gradually adjusted their perception to align with the viewpoint of the other two individuals in the group. Normative social influence occurs when individuals conform to gain approval or acceptance from a group. This often leads to public compliance, where they go along with the group's views or actions without truly believing in them. Asch was the first psychologist to study this in a controlled laboratory setting. The social impact theory encompasses three components, with normative influence being one of them. Group size has unexpected effects; as the group grows larger, each individual's influence diminishes. The group's importance to an individual, or its strength, plays a key role in social influence, especially for groups we value. "Immediacy" refers to the closeness of the group to the influencer in terms of time and physical proximity. The pioneering psychologist who delved into the study of conformity was Jenness in 1932. In his experiment, he introduced a somewhat ambiguous situation involving a glass bottle filled with beans. Each participant was tasked with estimating the number of beans inside the bottle.

Subsequently, Jenness brought the group together in a room with the bottle and asked them to make a collective estimate. To gauge the influence of the group on their initial estimates, participants were then requested to make individual estimations once more. In separate interviews, participants were given the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to adjust their initial predictions to align with the group's estimate or stick with their original guess. Almost everyone chose to modify their individual predictions to be more consistent with the collective estimate. Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment Solomon Asch conducted an experiment with groups of seven to nine participants, which initially seemed rather dull. In a series of trials, these participants were asked to compare the length of a single vertical line to three other vertical lines of varying lengths, one of which was clearly a match to the first line. Participants had to announce their answers aloud based on their seating order. For the first two trials, there was complete unanimity in their responses. However, the experiment took a sharp turn from boring to unsettling when, on the third trial, the entire group collectively agreed on the wrong answer. In reality, most of the participants were actually collaborators in the study, with only one person being unaware of the deception—the genuine participant in the experiment—and this person often ended up being the last to express their opinion. Asch established a research model or paradigm by devising a set of repeatable procedures to gather data. The straightforward line judgment task forced unsuspecting participants into a situation where they had to choose between conforming to group pressure or trusting the clear evidence of their own eyes. In control studies without collaborators, participants provided the correct answer 98% of the time. In the experimental condition, Asch arranged for the collaborators to give incorrect answers more than 50% of the time. The social pressure to conform was so influential that approximately 37% of the participants gave in and provided the wrong answer at least once, and 75% of the participants conformed to the incorrect answer on occasion. To elucidate the reasons behind the participants' behavior, Asch analyzed both quantitative data (numerical results) and qualitative data (subjective results like content from interviews) from follow-up interviews in 1955. Some individuals who resisted conformity expressed a sense of duty to honestly convey what they saw. Interestingly, among those who did conform, a few seemed to do so because of informational social influence, as they began to doubt their own sensory perception abilities. Some participants mentioned going along with the group to avoid

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interfering with Asch's data, a motivation termed the "good subject bias," which is a form of social desirability. Group size, unanimity, coherence, and status of the group are a few elements that are linked to conformity. Other factors include culture, gender, age, and the significance of the stimulus.

Factors influencing social conformity include:

1. **Group size:** Asch identified that the extent of conformity within a group was influenced by the size of that group. Greater numbers of people tend to share similar attitudes and actions.
2. **Unanimity:** When most of the group responds in unison, individuals are more likely to follow the group's decisions.
3. **Group:** Cohesion Groups that have ties connecting them to one another and to the group as a whole exhibit more conformity than groups without those ties do.
4. **Status:** People are more inclined to fit in with high-status groups.
5. **Culture:** Civilizations that value collectivism displays more conformity than civilizations that value individualism. Smith and Bond (1998) observed cultural differences between Western and Eastern societies regarding conformity. In Western cultures, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, there is a tendency towards individualism, and people are often averse to appearing identical to others. Consequently, they are more inclined to exhibit non-conformity because they place a high value on independence and self-sufficiency, prioritizing the individual over the community. In contrast, Eastern cultures, particularly in Asian regions, tend to prioritize the well-being of their family and social groups over their individual needs. These societies are often described as collectivist, and they exhibit higher rates of conformity as a result.
6. **Gender:** In circumstances involving surveillance, women are more prone than men to conform; yet, when there is no surveillance, this tendency is reversed. Gender disparities are created by societal conventions and have an impact on how men and women respond to social pressure.
7. **Age:** Younger people are more prone than older people to comply, possibly because they have less prestige and experience.
8. **Importance of stimuli** When the task is viewed as vital, people might conform less frequently. According to a study, compliance fell when participants were informed that their replies would be used to create aircraft safety signals.

Need and Significance

All contacts are now more frequently conducted online than in the past due to the substantial developments in social networking systems. Psychologists have historically conducted in-person research to understand a variety of viewpoints. It is critical to understand how well certain perspectives work on digital platforms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is a type of article. A body of work done by earlier scientists is technically called literature. Any scientific investigation starts with a review of literature. Working with literature is an essential part of the research process which generates the idea, helps in developing significant questions and is regarded as instrumental in the process of research design. The sources of review include journals and subject specific books, reviews, abstract, internet, doctoral dissertations etc. A collective body of works done by earlier scientists is technically called literature. Any scientific investigation starts with a review of the literature. In fact, working with literature is an essential part of the research process which generates the

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idea, helps in developing significant questions and is regarded as instrumental in the process of research design (Singh, A.K,1996).

STUDIES ON GENDER

In 2019, Senuri Wijenayake and her team conducted a study titled "Measuring the Effects of Gender on Online Social Conformity" to explore how the gender composition of groups influences social conformity in online environments. They utilized an online quiz format where participants provided their responses and confidence levels both before and after being presented with artificially generated peer responses. Their findings revealed an overall conformity rate of 39%, and they observed a significant impact of gender. This gender effect was evident in several aspects, including the gender makeup of the majority, the perceived nature of the question, the gender of the participants, visual cues provided by the system, and the accuracy of the final response. The study concluded by emphasizing the importance of considering the influence of gender on conformity when designing online group settings and discussing the implications of their findings.

In 2022, a study titled "The Effects of Social Conformity and Gender on Drivers' Behavioral Intention Toward Level-3 Automated Vehicles" was conducted by Yue Liu and colleagues. The study's results suggest that there are no significant gender differences in drivers' behavioral intentions. Furthermore, in situations involving a large group, there are no apparent gender disparities, and drivers tend to exhibit a stronger inclination to operate Level-3 automated vehicles (L3 AVs). However, in the context of a small-group scenario, male drivers displayed notably higher driving intentions compared to their female counterparts.

In 2023, Ifra Iftikhar and their research team conducted a study titled "Filtered Reality: Investigating Gender Differences in Instagram Usage, Social Conformity Pressure, and Regret Among Young Adults." This study aimed to explore whether Instagram users, based on their gender, experienced feelings of regret or social pressure when using the platform. Drawing upon theories of social comparison and conformity, the research delved into whether Instagram users held themselves to social norms and assessed others within the platform. To collect data, an online survey was administered to 390 Instagram users. The study's findings revealed that women tended to use Instagram's filters and editing tools more frequently than men, although further investigation is required to understand the reasons behind this behavior. Surprisingly, there were no notable differences between men and women regarding the connection between Instagram usage and social pressure, contrary to initial predictions. Instead, the study found that the amount of time individuals spent on Instagram and the pressure to conform to societal norms were significantly influenced by the frequency of platform usage. Interestingly, a significant proportion of Instagram users, regardless of gender, admitted to experiencing remorse after posting content. These findings suggest that individuals who use Instagram more frequently may encounter greater pressure to align with the opinions and behaviors of other users, with regular usage potentially exacerbating this sense of social conformity pressure.

STUDIES ON GROUP SIZE

In a study conducted in 1963 by Edwin J. Thomas and colleagues, titled "Effects of Group Size," the researchers aimed to investigate how group size influenced various dependent variables, including social conformity. The size of the study group was a significant and central factor in their research.

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In 1975, Lena A. Nordholm and her colleagues conducted a study titled "Effects of Group Size and Stimulus Ambiguity on Conformity." This research investigated the interplay between stimulus ambiguity and group size. They discovered that the group size effect could occur even in situations involving ambiguous stimuli. It was suggested that variations in research methods might have previously hindered the identification of the group size effect in earlier studies. The experiment also reaffirmed the widely recognized influence of stimulus ambiguity on compliance.

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In 2005, a study titled "Group Size and Conformity," conducted by Rod Bond and colleagues, explored the relationship between conformity and group size. The study reviewed existing theories and research on this topic and conducted a meta-analysis of 125 Asch-type conformity studies. The findings of this meta-analysis suggested that the influence of group size on conformity depends on which social influence process is dominant, rather than adhering to the assumption of a single underlying function, as proposed in formal models of social influence. The study argued that informational impact tends to be more pronounced when participants provide private responses and have indirect communication with the majority, while normative influence is more likely to be stronger when individuals offer public responses and engage in direct interaction with the majority. Furthermore, the meta-analysis revealed that the association between group size and conformity varies depending on whether participants provide public or private responses and whether the Asch or Crutchfield paradigm is used.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research project is to be undertaken & among other things, identifies the methods to be used in it. These methods, described in methodology, define the means of or modes of data collection or sometimes, how a specific result is to be calculated. Methodology does not define specific methods, even though much attention is given to the nature and kinds of processes to be followed in a particular procedure or to attain an objective (Howell, 2013).

Statement of Problem

The present study is entitled "Redesign of Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment on online platform".

Research Questions

1. Is Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment validate on online platform?
2. Does gender influence social conformity?
3. Does group size influence social conformity?

Objectives

1. To check the validity of Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment in online platform.
2. To know the influence of group size in social conformity.
3. To know the influence of gender difference in social conformity.

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Hypotheses

- H1: Group size is correlated with social conformity.
- H2: There would be significant gender difference with social conformity.

Research Design

Participants

The study consists of 100 early young adults in the age range of 18 to 26 collected from Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. The convenience sampling method was used for the sampling.

Tool

A set of 12 trials each consists of 4 lines as directly adopted from Solomon Asch original experiment of social conformity

Data Collection Procedure

For the study, the samples are collected from early young adults in the age range of 18 to 25. The experimenter divided 100 participants into four groups of Group 1, Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4 of 10, 15, 30 and 45 participants in each groups respectively. For Group 1, the experimenter divided total 10 participants into 2 real participants and 8 confederates. For group 3, total 15 participants into 8 real participants and 7 confederates. Likewise, for group 4, total 30 participants into 16 real participants and 24 confederates. And for group 4, total 45 participants into 32 real participants and 13 Confederates. The following instructions were given to the WhatsApp group consisting of confederates. "Today we are going to conduct experiment. In this experiment the experimenter will upload 12 trials. Each trail of four lines. There will be a line x on the left side and three lines A, B and C on the right side. Each trial is only visible to you for 10 seconds. The experimenter will delete each trial after 10 seconds. Then, you have to identify a line of equal length to X on the left form the three lines on the right. But the experimenter will show you the answer you need to give in all the trials before the experiment starts. So, you only have to say that answer when each trial is visible. The following instructions were also given to the WhatsApp group of ten. "Today we are going to conduct experiment. In this experiment the experimenter will uphold you 12 trials one by one. Each trial will have four lines with line X on the left and three lines A, B, C on right. Each trial is only visible you for 5seconds.Experimenter will delete each trial after 5seconds.You have to find a line of equal length X on the left from the three lines on the right". Experimenter gave numbers from 1 to 10 to each participant in order to reply in these number order.

Once the data collection was completed, the data were scored as per the manual. The relevant information was uploaded into an excel sheet and analyzed with the help of statistical software SPSS. To test the research Hypotheses, the research used correlation and independent sample t test and results will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Data Analysis

The hypothesis is tested by using independent sample t test and Pearson correlation coefficient

Correlation test

Correlation is a statistical method that describes the relationship between two or more variables. It can be used to describe whether variables change together, and in what direction.

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Independent sample t test

An independent sample t test is a statistical test that compares the means of two independent groups to determine if they are significantly different.

Variables

Independent Variables

- Group Size
- Gender

Dependent Variable

- Social Conformity

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent was taken from each participant before filling the questionnaire.
- The purpose of the study was explained properly to each participant.
- Clarification regarding the confidentiality was given before filling the questionnaire.
- Participants were treated equally and fairly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter represents the results reached by the investigator through the statistical analysis. Analysis is the key of any research, where it is the way to test the hypothesis formulated by the investigator. The chapter consists of the data relevant to the test hypothesis and interpretation of the results. The data are given in tabular format also.

The aim of the present study was to check the validity of Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment on online platform. The objectives were to know the influence of group size in social conformity and to know the influence of gender difference in social conformity. The hypotheses of present study were H1: Group size is correlated with social conformity. H2: there would be significant gender difference with social conformity.

Hypothesis 1 is that group size correlated with social conformity. And table 1 shows the result.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient between group size and social conformity.

Variables	Pearson Correlation.	Sig. Value
Social conformity Group Size	.994	.006

Table 1 shows Pearson correlation coefficient between group size and social conformity. The sampling size is 100 in which early young adults in the age range of 18 to 26. The Pearson correlation coefficient between group size and social conformity is .994, the correlation is significant at the level of 0.05, which indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between group size and social conformity. Thus, the hypothesis which states that "group size is correlated with social conformity" is accepted. In the field of sociology, the term "group" is used broadly, encompassing small gatherings where members are aware of each other and can interact, to large assemblies where people share common characteristics, such as ethnic groups. The study of group size focuses on two distinct scenarios. First, it examines groups formed to achieve a common purpose or goal, exploring factors that affect their effectiveness. Second, it delves into groups facing collective dilemmas, where members must choose

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between actions benefiting themselves or the group as a whole, highlighting the challenge of balancing individual and collective interests.

Social conformity is a form of social influence where individuals alter their beliefs or actions to align with a group. It's a widespread human inclination to adopt the views and behaviours of the majority. One common reason for this conformity is the belief that if everyone else is doing something, it's likely the right choice. Another reason is the fear of facing negative social consequences for not conforming to norms, motivating us to conform to avoid such repercussions. We come to the conclusion that the size of the majority, the nature of the task, self-confidence, and specific personality factors all influence online social conformity.

Hypothesis 2 is that there would be significant gender difference with social conformity. And table 2 shows the result.

Table 2: Independent sample t test of gender and social conformity.

Variable	t	Sig. Value
Social conformity Gender	4.428	.038

The obtained t value of gender and social conformity is found to be $t = 4.428$ and the p- value is found to be 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05, which indicates that there is significant difference between gender and social conformity. Thus, the hypothesis which states that “there would be gender difference with social conformity” is accepted. Gender, in everyday language, pertains to the distinctions between males and females. Encyclopedia Britannica defines gender identity as an individual's self-perception as either male or female, separate from their biological sex. Although gender is often used interchangeably with sex, in social sciences, it typically denotes societal distinctions, known as gender roles in biological sciences. Throughout history, feminism has argued that gender roles are socially constructed, not based on biology. Individuals whose gender identity doesn't align with their physical sex may identify as transgender or genderqueer.

Social conformity is a form of social influence where individuals alter their beliefs or actions to align with a group. It's a widespread human inclination to adopt the views and behaviors of the majority. One common reason for this conformity is the belief that if everyone else is doing something, it's likely the right choice. Another reason is the fear of facing negative social consequences for not conforming to norms, motivating us to conform to avoid such repercussions. We come to the conclusion that the size of the majority, the nature of the task, self-confidence, and specific personality factors all influence online social conformity. According to the present study, group size is correlated with social conformity and there is significant gender difference with social conformity.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The chapter provides an overview of the summary of the present study, findings of the study, conclusions, implications, limitations and scope for further research.

Summary and Conclusion of the study

The study entitled " Redesign of Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment on online platform "undertaken to check the validity of Solomon Asch's social conformity experiment on online platform. The sample of 100 early young adults in the age range of 18 to 26 both from Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. Data was collected using convenience sampling method.

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The data collection of the study was done using a set of 12 trials each consists of 4 lines as directly adopted from Solomon Asch original experiment of social conformity.

The obtained results were analyzed using correlation and independent sample t test. The results show group size is correlated with social conformity and there is significant gender difference with social conformity.

Findings of the study

- Group size is positively correlated with social conformity
- There is significant gender difference with social conformity

Limitations of the study

- Sample size is less.
- Samples are collected from limited area.
- The samples are collected only from early young adults.

Scope for further study

- Sample size can be increased for better generalization.
- Samples can be included from other states.
- Samples can be included from other population such as adolescents, middle and old adults.
- Influence of other influencing factors such as age, culture, group cohesion etc. can learn.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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