

## Role of Conformity Behaviour of Managers in an Organisation

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**“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)**

### ABSTRACT

The study examines the behavior of managers, defining the clear meaning of conformity. It covers the types of conformity and its relation with the manager. The purpose of framing the paper is to provide a conceptual framework of organizational conformity behaviour and manager’s attitude towards the same. It concludes that one should conform by realising the future aspects of building that conformity.

**Key words-** Conformity, Asch experiment, Social Norms, Attribution

### ➤ Connotation of Conformity

The term conformity is sometimes used to indicate “an agreement to the majority position, brought about either by a desire to ‘fit in’ or be liked (normative) or because of a desire to be correct (informational), or simply to conform to a social role (identification).”

### ➤ Types of Social Conformity

S.NO	TYPES	MEANING
1	<b>Normative Conformity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yielding to group pressure because a person wants to fit in with the group. E.g. Asch Line Study.</li> <li>Conforming because the person is scared of being rejected by the group.</li> <li>This type of conformity usually involves compliance—where a person publicly accepts the views of a group but privately rejects them.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Informational Conformity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This usually occurs when a person lacks knowledge and looks to the group for guidance.</li> <li>Or when a person is in an ambiguous (i.e. unclear) situation and socially compares their behaviour with the group. E.g. Sherif’s Study.</li> <li>This type of conformity usually involves internalization – where a person accepts the views of the groups and adopts them as an individual.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Compliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly changing behaviour to fit in with the group while privately disagreeing.</li> <li>In other words, conforming to the majority (publicly), in</li> </ul>

		<p>spite of not really agreeing with them (privately).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is seen in Asch's line experiment.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Informational Conformity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly changing behaviour to fit in with the group and also agreeing with them privately.</li> </ul>
5	<b>Ingratiation Conformity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a person conforms to impress or gain favour/acceptance from other people.</li> <li>It is similar to normative influence but is motivated by the need for social rewards rather than the threat of rejection, i.e., group pressure does not enter the decision to conform.</li> </ul>
6	<b>Identification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conforming to the expectations of a social role.</li> <li>Similar to compliance, there does not have to be a change in private opinion.</li> </ul>

➤ **Asch Experiment:- The concept of forming conformity behaviour**

**Aim:** Solomon Asch (1951) conducted an experiment to investigate the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could affect a person to conform.

**Procedure:** Asch used a lab experiment to study conformity, whereby 50 male students from Swarthmore College in the USA participated in a 'vision test'. Using a line judgment task, Asch put a naive participant in a room with seven confederates.

The confederates had agreed in advance what their responses would be when presented with the line task. The real participant did not know this and was led to believe that the other seven participants were also real participants like themselves.

Each person in the room had to state aloud which comparison line (A, B or C) was most like the target line. The answer was always obvious. The real participant sat at the end of the row and gave his or her answer last.

There were 18 trials in total and the confederates gave the wrong answer on 12 trials (called the critical trials). Asch was interested to see if the real participant would conform to the majority view. Asch's experiment also had a control condition where there were no confederates, only a "real participant".

**Results:** Asch measured the number of times each participant conformed to the majority view. On average, about one third (32%) of the participants who were placed in this situation went along and conformed to the clearly incorrect majority on the critical trials. Over the 12 critical trials about 75% of participants conformed at least once and 25% of participant never conformed. In the control group, with no pressure to conform to confederates, less than 1% of participants gave the wrong answer.

**Conclusion:**

Why did the participants conform so readily? When they were interviewed after the experiment, most of them said that they did not really believe their conforming answers, but had gone along with the group for fear of being ridiculed or thought "peculiar". A few of them said that they really did believe the group's answers were correct. Apparently, people conform for two main reasons: because they want to fit in with the group (normative influence) and because they believe the group is better informed than they are (informational influence).

### ➤ **Manager's conformity behaviour and its consequences towards workplace**

Every social organization is largely dependent on the system of roles that embodies the relationships between groups and individuals within the social system (unit), their expected patterns of behaviour, duties, rights and responsibilities.

Even the System Approach of the Modern Management Theory highlights that a group is interrelated but separate elements working towards a common purpose.

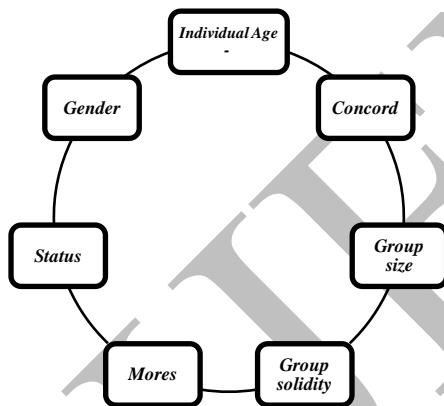
The arrangement of elements must be orderly, there must be proper communication facilitating interaction between the elements and finally the interaction should lead to achieve a common goal.

Managers play a critical role while distributing the task to each element (employee) and for that he has to create his own conformity to get an appropriate result.

Employees often create a set of expectations about their workplace. Employees tend to make psychological contracts with their organizations and if their expectations are not met, the employee may perceive a psychological contract breach by the employers (Chiu and Peng, 2008). This then creates a problem particularly in the workplace. Workplace deviance may arise when employees perceive that they have been mistreated because of his managers conformity formed in influence of few and as such want to retaliate against the organization. It may be viewed as negative reciprocity.

### ➤ **Factors that Influence Conformity**

“The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking.”  
(John Kenneth Galbraith)



Conformity may result from either slight, unconscious influences or direct and clear social pressure. Numbers of factors are associated with conformity. A few of these include:

**Individual Age** - Younger individuals are more likely to conform due to lack of experience and status

**Concord** - Individuals are more likely to conform when the rest of the group's response is unanimous or same.

**Group size** - individuals are more likely to conform in larger groups, although research suggests that conformity pressures peak once the majority reaches about four or five

**Group solidity** - groups high in cohesion produce more conformity than non-cohesive groups

**Mores** - collectivist cultures exhibit a higher degree of conformity than individualistic cultures

**Status** - individuals are more likely to conform to high status groups

**Gender** - societal norms establish gender differences which affect the ways in which men and women conform to social influence; women are more likely to conform than men in situations involving surveillance, but less likely when there is no surveillance

### ➤ **Why Social norms leads to conformity**

There are many ways that influence behavior of people. One of the most important is that the presence of others seems to set up expectations. It is not expected that a person should behave randomly but to behave in certain ways in particular situations. Each social situation entails its own particular set of expectations about the “proper” way to behave. Such expectations can vary from group to group.

One way in which these expectations become apparent is when we look at the roles that people play in society.

Social roles are the part people play as members of a social group. With each social role you adopt, your behavior changes to fit the expectations both you and others have of that role.

In the words of William Shakespeare:

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits, and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts.

These lines capture the essence of social roles. Think of how many roles you play in a single day, e.g. son, daughter, sister, brother, students, worker, friend etc. Each social role carries expected behaviors called norms.

**Social Norms** are unwritten rules about how to behave. They provide us with an expected idea of how to behave in a particular social group or culture. **For example** we expect employees to follow punctuality and play their role in the organization.

### ➤ Why we conform:- Supremacy of faction

**“The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking.”**  
**John Kenneth Galbraith**

Whenever we change our behaviour, views, and attitudes in response to the real or imagined presence of others, we are experiencing conformity. Individual psychology/conformity gets influence from society one lives in. The term Attribution is the process which seeks to determine the cause behind other's behaviour. There are three aspects of attribution which are as follows

S.No	Types	Meaning
1	Consensus	Information regarding the extent to which behaviour by one person shown by others as well
2	Consistency	Information regarding the extent to which a specific person shows similar behaviour to a given stimulus across time.
3	Distinctiveness	Information regarding the extent to which a given person reacts in the same Manner to different stimuli or situation.

On the basis of these we can conclude that the actions of others conform and inform us of the customs and accepted practices in a situation. Others inform us of what is right to do, how to behave in new situations.

### ➤ CONCLUSION

**“One of the greatest regrets in life is being what others would want you to be, rather than being yourself.”**  
**(Shannon L. Alder)**

In our daily decisions, we should also examine whether our reasons justify our actions. In an unfamiliar situation, first ask whether the actions observed and performed by us is rational, warranted, and consistent with one's own principles before thoughtlessly and automatically adopting them.

To resist the powers of group conformity: managers should know what it stand for; determine how really important it is that these other people like them, especially when they are strangers, take a future perspective to imagine what they will think of their current conforming action at some time in the future.

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