

Module: Study Skills for Psychology

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AI Acknowledgement

I) I acknowledge the use of Quillbot (<https://quillbot.com/paraphrasing-tool>) on 3/9/2026 to check my work using the prompt(s):

1. Paraphrase: “A change in belief or behaviour in response to real or imagined group pressure when there is no direct request to comply with the group nor any reason to justify the behaviour change.”

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

II) I acknowledge the use of Grammarly (<https://app.grammarly.com/>) on 3/9/2026 to check my work using the prompt(s):

1. Proofread (grammar)

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

1.0 Paraphrasing

Conformity refers to a shift in an individual's behaviour or thinking due to actual or perceived pressure from a group, regardless of whether the group is a minority or majority. An example of conformity in everyday life is adopting a friend's opinions or fashion or music preference. One of the popular experiments on conformity was conducted by Asch. In his experiment, participants were told to match the length of a standard line to one of three comparison lines. The result showed that many participants gave an incorrect answer when they were placed in a group with people who purposely gave the same incorrect answer. Conformity is influenced by several factors, with one of them being the majority size and unanimity. In one of his experiments, Asch found that conformity did not increase when three or more stooges were included in the experiment. This indicates that what matters is the unanimity of the majority, instead of the real majority size. Other factors influencing conformity include fear of mockery, the difficulty of the task, and providing answers in private.

According to Gross (2020), there are two types of social influence: informational social influence and normative social influence. Informational social influence refers to an individual's desire to be correct and to make a true understanding of reality, where they rely on others for guidance to explain a stimulus accurately when they experience uncertainty or an unclear circumstance. Conversely, normative social influence reflects one's desire for acceptance and creating a good impression on others. Gross (2020) argued that conformity occurs because others are capable of rewarding, accepting, rejecting or punishing us. A key characteristic of conformity is that group influence arises because an individual feels a sense of belonging. Consequently, a group's norms serve as relevant standards that shape attitudes and behaviour.

Furthermore, Moscovici et al.'s experiment proved that the majority's judgements can be influenced by a consistent minority. The minority's consistent behavioural style is influential, despite lacking numerical benefit. Majority group members are more likely to attribute the behaviour to the minority's internal traits when they consistently present a unique viewpoint. Additionally, in group polarisation, decisions made by groups are more extreme compared to the average of individuals' initial positions. Groupthink refers to a thinking method in which the adoption of logical decision-making processes is outweighed by the need to achieve unanimous agreement.

In conclusion, conformity varies across cultures. People who are brought up in an individualist culture may feel uneasy with the idea that their behaviour can be influenced by others against their will and prefer to take charge of their own lives. However, in collectivist cultures, it is strongly encouraged to adapt one's behaviour to meet expectations of others, and at times it is considered a moral duty. Refusing to conform to others is not necessarily undesirable. It can be helpful or creative, such as presenting a better solution to an issue. It may be one's desire for independence or a fear of losing personal identity. On the other hand, conformity serves a crucial social function, allowing people to fulfill social and practical needs and ensuring efficient social life.

Reference

Gross, R. (2020). *Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour*. Hachette Learning. Chapter 26: Conformity and Group Influence (pp.743-767).

2.0 Abstracts

Article 1: Why We Cheat

Cheating is a common behaviour that takes place in both minor everyday situations and serious scenarios. The article aimed to explore psychological reasons for cheating and moral hypocrisy. Findings were derived from various psychological studies, including matrix experiment with monetary rewards conducted by Dan Ariely, Batson's coin-flip experiment to study moral hypocrisy, a dictator game, and observations on real-world situations, such as golf mulligans and password sharing. According to research, people often engage in self-deception, and cheating is common even in trivial situations. Studies indicated that moral wiggle room encouraged people to be dishonest while preserving moral beliefs. Furthermore, Rothgerber (2023) argued that an individual's need to defend a moral identity may contribute to moral outrage. Individuals who expressed moral outrage or claimed high moral character may make up for a perceived lack of morality. Rothgerber concluded that signs of strong moral superiority should be avoided as they could be an attempt to mask a lack of morality rather than a true commitment to ethics.

Article 2: Workplace Friendships

Workplace friendships refer to a voluntary relationship based on common interests, trust, and support. However, these relationships can both promote and compromise professional settings. Hamilton et. al. (2022) explored benefits and risks surrounding workplace friendships, and strategies to maintain boundaries. The article aimed to examine whether workplace friendships were feasible without violating professional integrity, and how psychological evidence ensured they were positive and equitable. A variety of psychological research was gathered to investigate social capital, cronyism, workplace friendship dynamics, and employee experiences during career transitions. The benefits of workplace friendships included reduced workplace accidents, enhanced job satisfaction and creativity, as well as lower turnover. However, they could also result in rumours, sexual harassment, favouritism, and reduced organisational loyalty. Power dynamics could deteriorate friendships and lead to jealousy, particularly during unilateral promotions. Seven practices were highlighted to ensure equitable workplace friendships, including discussing boundaries openly, limiting exclusion, promoting positive relationships, being authentic, protecting confidentiality, acknowledging that not everyone would be a friend, and managers making sure everyone is treated fairly. Therefore, maintaining boundaries is essential in workplace friendships in order to reduce outcomes that are cronyistic or exclusive.

Article 3: Gender: How Stubborn are the Stereotypes?

The expectations about how men and women should behave remain unchanged despite years of social advancements. In this article, Hutchings & Sullivan (2023) explored how gender stereotypes have shifted over the past 50 years and theories, such as the zero-sum belief theory, alliance, and precarious manhood beliefs. Results from the Gender Harmony project were compiled together with results from past studies by Broverman et al. (1972) and Williams and Best (1990). It was found that in less egalitarian countries, the levels of precarious manhood beliefs were higher. Furthermore, the findings indicated greater zero-sum beliefs in countries with major existing parity, where men were less likely to support collective action to advocate for gender equality. Additionally, recent findings revealed that both men and women may experience problems with self-concept based on how they perceive themselves and others about gender and equality issues. The authors concluded that in order to achieve equality and combat prescriptive stereotypes, multidisciplinary efforts, from education, media, to policy, were crucial.

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