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Conformity behaviour of secondary school students in relation to intelligence and socio-economic status

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Abstract

Conformity is the act of matching attitudes, beliefs and behavior to group norms. The present study was conducted on a sample of 150 secondary school boys and girls (75 students of class 9th and 75 students of class +1) from three schools of Amritsar city affiliated to Punjab School Education Board. Conformity Behavior Scale, Standard Progressive Matrices and Socio-Economic Status Scale was used for assessment of variables. The data analysis clearly indicates a significant difference in conformity behavior of class 9th and class +1 students i.e. conformity increases with age. Significant gender difference in conformity behaviour also found at class 9th level, but no significant gender differences in conformity behavior were found at +1 level, however boys of class +1 shown more conformity than girls. Girls of both the classes belong to higher socio economic status and are more intelligent than boys but show less conformity. Results show significant positive correlation between conformity, intelligence and socio-economic status at both the levels.

Keywords: secondary school students, intelligence, socio-economic status

Introduction

Social world influences people's choices, attitudes and behavior in very powerful manner. Social norms are shared rules of conduct within particular formal and informal groups. The pressure to conform to social norms is often powerful, because people who deviate from norms often experience negative consequences. These fears of experiencing negative consequences motivate them to learn and adhere to the norms or show conformity. In society some people are more dominant than others. Therefore people may be categorized as dominant and less or non dominant. Social psychologists named them non-conformers and conformers respectively. Conformers are the individuals who change their behavior due to group pressure or by the suggestions of others. So conformity is a change in behavior towards a person or a group as a result of real group pressure. Conformity of an individual not only exists in real life setting but it is practiced in school system also.

The students show acceptance or rejection towards other fellow students on the basis of certain group norms. Adolescent students are easily affected by the reestablished norms, opinions, behaviors and judgments. Conformity is private acceptance or attitudinal change towards a person or group and is affected by many psychological variables like intelligence, gender, socio-economic status, achievement, adjustment, age, birth-order, culture, type of personality, self esteem etc. All these variables affect individuals in order to conform or avoid an individual or group. Hence it is the vital area of study in order to direct them in right direction by reducing the gaps between one's opinion and group opinion. The role of teacher is very evident to improve conformity in students which further allows society to advance smoothly. The students are to be taught the overt behavioral complies with the group under which a student changes his behavior towards some norms but without changing his cognition.

Conformity

Conformity is a type of social influence involving a change in attitudes, beliefs, behaviours or perceptions to match the behavior of others (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) [4]. It can also be simply defined as yielding to group pressure and is the way to reduce the discrepancy between one's opinion and group's opinion.

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Sometimes others are not interested but we modify according o the norms of the group hence we conform the group in accordance to its norms and judgment. Researchers have found that people conform for different reasons but two most important reasons are desire to be liked and desire to be right (Martin & Hewstone, 2003).

Conformity among adolescents is equally important. Adolescent is the person aging between 13-18 or 19 years. It is a period of stress and strain. Due to group pressures, an adolescent sometimes modifies his attitudes, opinions and behavior in order to adjust himself/herself in the group. The conformity of person is also affected by his or her intelligence. Some people conform more than others and there are gender differences also in conformity but are very complicated (Becker, 1986) [2].

Intelligence

Intelligence is a sort of mental energy in the form of mental abilities available with an individual which enable him to handle his environment in terms of adaptation to face novel situations as effectively as possible. Intelligence is general capacity of an individual to adjust his thinking consciously to new requirements. It is the general mental adaptability to new problems and conditions of life. Intelligence is the ability to learn from experiences. Many researchers have tried to find out the relationship between intelligence and conformity. The findings suggest that smarter the person, the better he or she is at observing the attitude and opinions of their peer group. This makes sense because it is an intelligent behaviour to find acceptance amongst their peers. This acceptance of peer group has many benefits. They know that their non-conformist behavior may threaten the belongingness to a social group or has potential of enlarging the psychological distance from others. People who deviate from the group are more likely to be punished, ridiculed or even rejected by other group members. However the findings of some researchers have shown different relationship between intelligence and conformity. General intelligence is a strong predictor of future resources. So the more intelligent some-one is the less depended the person is on the group. This means that people with higher intelligence can afford more non-conformist behavior because of their capacity to secure resources in isolation. Therefore it is proposed that as general intelligence increases the need to conform to group norms decreases (Gottfredeon & Kahazawa, 2004). It is found that intelligent people having I.Q. level 145 or 150 tend to be alienated from society. Coleman (1985) [5] suggests that gifted children realize, quite early, that other people's behavior towards them changes when their difference becomes evident. Accordingly, the gifted children attempts to manipulate the information others have about them by skillfully adapting their behavior and performance to conform to the social and educational norms of their age-group. Buescher and Higham (1989) likewise noted a tendency in 13 and 14 year old gifted adolescents to disassociate themselves from activities which would identify them as gifted, while seeking to cultivate second identities in more socially acceptable fields such as music, debating photography or athletics. Rhodes, Nancy, Wood and Wendy (1992) [14] concluded that low intelligence recipients were more influenced than highly intelligent ones. The lesser intelligent people easily conform to ideas of their pears.

Socio Economics Status

Another independent variable under consideration is socio-economic status. Socio economic status is an important non-cognitive factor affecting the behavior, abilities and achievement of students. The term socio economic status means the position an individual and his family occupies by means of education, income, material and cultural possessions and participation in social activities. In others words socio economic status is the status which include both social and economic achievement of an individual or a group. Individuals are more likely to conform to high status group. The teacher can modify the behavior of pupil through various social skills, communication skills, activities etc. This helps students to fit themselves in society & accept the group norms. Hence socio-economic status affects the conformity of an individual considering other variables like age, gender etc. Societal norms often establish gender differences and have reported differences in the way men and women conform to social influence. Researchers have also reported the effect of gender and age on conformity. Rhine (1968) [13] conducted a study on first-and later-born pre-adolescent girls and found that first-borns were more conforming than later-borns in the low-achievement arousal condition, but the relative positions of the birth order groups were reversed in the high-achievement arousal condition. Adams, Ryan, Hoffman, Dobson and Nielsen (1984) [17] observed no relation between identity status and conformity of adolescents. They also found that diffusion students were most influenced by peer pressure conformity, whereas identity-achievement students were most likely to report engaging in conformity behavior for achievement gains. Laurence, Kathryn, Steinberg and Monahan (2007) [9] assessed age differences and developmental change in resistance to peer influence. Results show that across demographic groups, resistance to peer influence increases linearly between ages 14 and 18. In contrast, there is little evidence for growth in this capacity between ages 10 and 14 or between 18 and 30. Middle adolescence is an especially significant period for the development of the capacity to stand up for what one believes and resist the pressures of one's peers to do otherwise. Teese and Bradely (2008) [15] found that both impulsivity and perceived risks and benefits influenced college students' participation in reckless sexual activity and reckless driving. They also found peer pressure to be the strongest predictor of substances use among college students. Peer conformity and influence, either in the form of peer pressure of just the desire to belong, have a strong influence on the decision for a college student to engage in reckless behavior. Maria (2009) [10] examined how college students perceive their same-sex friends, as well as their own, participation in activities as a result of peer pressure. Participants were undergraduate students between the ages of 18-22 in Psychology classes. A survey was handed out that gave students two different situations in which a character gave into peer pressure and conformed to a peer group despite the character's personal beliefs. Participants were asked to first rate on a scale how likely they would have given into peer pressure if put in the same situation. Then, they were asked to rate how likely they believed their closest same-sex friend would have given into peer pressure if they were put into the same situation. The area of comparison is the difference in ratings of self and friends.

Goretty (2012) [7] conducted a study to determine whether perceived peer influence overtakes perceived parental influence among adolescents on the pattern of their conformity behavior. The study was carried on 312 randomly selected students from eight secondary school students. The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant difference between conformity to parents and conformity to

peers among adolescents. So the present study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To study conformity behavior of secondary school students with respect to age, gender, intelligence and socio-economic status
- To study the relationship of conformity behavior with intelligence and socio-economic status of secondary school students

Hypotheses of The Study

The following hypotheses were tested in light of the proposed objectives:

- There exist no significant differences in conformity behavior of secondary school students with respect to age, gender, intelligence and socio-economic status.
- There exists no significant relationship of conformity behavior with intelligence and socio-economic status of secondary school students.

Significance of the Problem

Man by nature is a social being and he cannot live without society. In society some people are more dominant than others. Therefore people may be categorized as dominant and less or non dominant. Social psychologists named them non-conformers and conformers. Conformers are the individuals who change their behavior due to group pressure or by the suggestions of others. So conformity is a change in behavior towards a person or a group as a result of real group pressure. Conformity of an individual not only exists in real life setting but also it is practiced in school system. The students show acceptance or rejection towards other fellow students on the basis of certain group norms. Hence conformity is private acceptance or attitudinal change towards a person or group. It is affected by many psychological variables like intelligence, gender, socio-economic status, achievement, adjustment, age, birth order, culture, type of personality self esteem etc. All these variables affect individuals in order to conform or avoid an individual or group

Adolescents are easily affected by the reestablished norms, opinions, behaviors and judgments. Hence it is the vital area of study in order to direct adolescent students in right direction by reducing the gaps between one's opinion and group opinion. The role of teacher is very evident to improve conformity in students which further allows society to orate smoothly. Hence the present study helps us to answer whether intelligence, age, gender, socio economic status effect conformity among adolescents or not.

Method and Procedure

The present study falls in the domain of descriptive research as it needs to study the conformity behavior of secondary school students in relation to intelligence and socio-economic status among adolescents.

Sample

A sample of 150 students was selected randomly from three schools of Amritsar city affiliated to P.S.E.B according to following division:
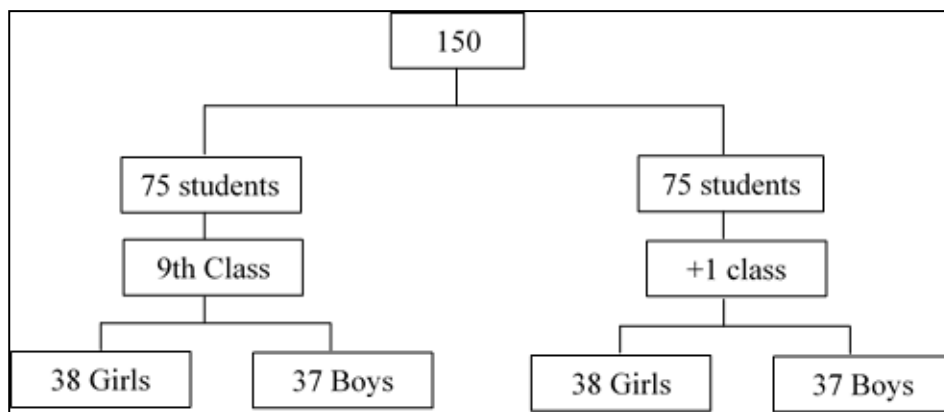
Measures Used

The selection of suitable tools is of vital importance for successful research. The following tools were selected and used by the investigator in the present study:

Conformity Behavior Scale (Rai: 1989)

The subjects were given conformity booklets having three figures filled with several dots. They were asked to look at each figure for 10 seconds, estimate number of dots in each figure and write down that number in the space provided.

After sometime the experimenter selected 3 confederates who were feeded with three numbers. These three numbers were written below the figures in the booklets of three confederates after deducting 20% from subjects estimated number in the first condition. First of all confederates and the Ss were asked to turn the page of booklet and look at figure 1 for 10 seconds duration. After this they were asked to close their booklets and give estimated number of dots of that figure.

The first confederate gave his estimation first (he gave the same number which experimenter has written in his booklet), followed by the second confederate (who also gave the same number written in his booklet by the experimenter, followed by the third confederate (who also read the number suggested by the experimenter).

In the last, subjects were asked to give their judgments about the estimated number of dots once again and those numbers were noted by the Ss in the given space of cover page. In this manner judgments were obtained from all the Ss for all three figures of the booklet once again.

Calculation of Conformity Score:

The data was obtained from all the Ss for both first and second condition. Thus, there were 2 sets of scores: subject's yielding (estimated scores in first condition), desired conformity (re-estimated scores after hearing the scores by three confederates) obtained from each subject. To know the extent of conformity, conformity scores (C.S.) were obtained from the raw data using the following formula:

$$C.S = \frac{Ss\ yielded\ Conformity}{E\ s\ desired\ Conformity} \times 100$$

In this way three conformity scores were obtained for three figures from each subject. These three CS (conformity scores) were summed and divided by 3 to obtain mean conformity score of each S and all the CS were summed up for both class 9th and class +1 separately to get total CS for both groups.

Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices Test (SPM: Raven's, 2000) [12].
The Raven's standard Progressive Matrices (Sets- A, B, C, D and E) or SPM is a test of person's capacity to apprehend meaningless figures presented for his observation, to see the relation between them, conceive the nature of the figure completing each system of relations problems divided into 5 sets of 12. In each set the first problem is as nearly as possible self evident. The problems which follow become progressively more difficult. SPM was designed to cover the widest possible range of mental ability and be equally useful for persons of all the ages, whatever their education, nationality or physical condition is. The scoring was done according to the direction given in the test manual. '1' mark was awarded for each correct answer and '0' for wrong answer. Test-retest reliability of SPM ranges from 0.81 to 0.89 and this range has been found to be highly satisfactory.

Socio-Economic Status Scale (Upadhyay and Saxena, 2008) [16].
This scale is intended to measure the SES of students of both rural and urban areas. The scale consists of 31 items in five parts related to (i) Personal Information (ii) Family (iii) Education (iv) Income and (v) Others (cultural and material possessions). Items were selected on the basis of social and economic needs of individuals of different strata and also on the basis of cultural-material symbols which affect individual's socio-economic status. There is no time limit but students generally take 20-25 minutes to complete it. Responses are scored according to the scoring key provided. The test-retest reliability of this test was found to be 0.83.

Results and Discussion
The data obtained for this investigation has been analyzed and discussed under the following headings:
1. Comparison of Means
2. Co-relational analysis

Comparison of Means
Conformity (Age)
In an attempt to examine significant differences between the students of class 9th and +1 on the measure of conformity, the t-test was applied on the obtained data. The means and standard deviations, along with their t-ratio and level of significance are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Showing the Means and Standard Deviation of Class 9th and Class +1 Students on Conformity along with Statistical Significance of Differences between Means (N=150)

Variables	9th Class		+1 Class		t-ratio	Significance level
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Conformity	59.02	30.20	87.20	69.49	3.22	0.002

Significance value at 0.01 level =2.57, Significance value at 0.05 level =1.96

A glance at the Table 1 clearly indicates that there is significant difference at 0.002 level in conformity behavior of class 9th (M=59.02) and class +1 (M=87.20) students. It means that class +1 students (15-16 yrs) conform more in

comparison to class 9th students. It can be concluded that conformity increased with age. The results of the present study are supported by the studies of Costanzo and Shaw, (1966) [6], Hamm, (1970) who concluded that younger subjects conform less than elder ones. Brofenbrenner and Devereux, (1970) argued that conformity to peers increases from middle childhood to adolescence.
Hence, our first hypothesis, "There exists no significant difference in conformity behavior of secondary school students with respect to age" is not accepted.

Conformity (Gender Differences)
In an attempt to examine gender difference on the measure of conformity of classes 9th and +1, t-test was applied on the obtained data. Gender differences with respect to intelligence and socio-economic status have also been examined. The values are presented in the Table 2 and Table 3

a) CLASS 9th
It is evident from the results given in the Table2 that there is significant gender difference at 0.01 level in conformity behaviour of class 9th students. The boys of 9th class (M=67.80) have scored higher on conformity than girls of 9th class (50.38). It means that boys conform more than girls.
The values reported in the Table 2 also show insignificant differences in intelligence and socio-economic status between boys and girls of 9th class students. However girls (M=31.00) have scored higher than boys (M=29.76) on the measure of intelligence. Similarly girls (M=40.47) have also scored more than boys (M= 37.51) on the measure of Socio-Economic Status.

Table 2: Showing the Means and Standard Deviation of 9th Class Boys and Girls on all the Measured Variables along with Statistical Significance of differences between Means (N=150)

Variables	9th Class				t-ratio	Significance level
	Boys		Girls			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Intelligence	29.76	7.82	31.00	10.22	0.59	NS
Socio-Economic Status	37.51	7.48	40.47	8.77	1.57	NS
Conformity	67.80	29.75	50.38	28.41	2.60	0.01

Significance value at 0.01 level =2.57, Significance value at 0.05 level =1.96

b) Class +1
It is evident from the results given in the Table 3 that there are no significant gender differences in conformity behavior as well as socio-economic status of class +1 students. However the boys of class +1 (M=93.05) scored more than the girls (M=81.51) on the measure of conformity. Similarly girls (M=37.97) have also scored slightly higher than boys (35.78) on the measure of socio-economic status.
The Table 3 also shows significant gender difference in intelligence at 0.01 level where girls of class +1 (M= 35.34) have scored more than boys (M=28.11) on the measure of intelligence. It is apparent that girls are more intelligent than boys. Gender differences in conformity may exist, sometimes due to socio economic status and intelligence. Lower status leads to greater tendencies to conform (Eagly, 1987). The results of the present study are in line with the above stated facts as the girls of both the classes belong to higher socio economic status and are more intelligent than boys, thus shown less conformity.
Thus our hypothesis there exists no significant gender differences in conformity behavior of secondary school

students with respect to intelligence and socio-economic status is partially accepted.

Table 3: Showing the Means and Standard Deviation of +1 Boys and Girls on all the Measured Variables along with Statistical Significance of Difference Between Means (N=150)

Variables	+1 Class				t-ratio	Significance level
	Boys		Girls			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Intelligence	28.11	9.18	35.34	8.81	3.48	0.01
Socio-Economic status	35.78	5.37	37.97	6.31	1.62	IS
Conformity	93.05	75.57	81.51	63.50	0.72	IS

Significance value at 0.01 level =2.57, Significance value at 0.05= 1.96

Co-Relational Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was applied to study the correlation between conformity and intelligence & socio-economic status in students of class 9th and class+1. The inter co-relation matrix is reported in Table 4. The notable findings from this table are summarized as follows:

Table 4: Matrix Showing Correlation among Conformity, Intelligence and Socio-Economic Status of Class 9th and Class +1 Secondary School Students

Class	9th Class	+1 Class	9th Class	+1 Class
Variables	Intelligence	Intelligence	Socio-economic	Socio-economic status.
Conformity	0.89**	0.80**	0.84**	0.87**

**Correlation significant at 0.01 level = 0.283*, Correlation significant at 0.05 level= 0.217

Conformity and Intelligence

The values reported in the Table 4 indicate that there is positive significant correlation between conformity behaviour and intelligence of class 9th (r = 0.89) as well as class +1 (r = 0.80) students at 0.01 level. It means that conformity increases with intelligence. Although, results of the present study are in contradiction with many other studies (Gottfredeon & Kahazawa, 2004; Rhodes, Nancy, Wood & Wendy, 1992; Buescher & Higham 1989) [14, 3] but, Conformity is interpreted in different ways in different cultures. Non-conformity has been considered as evidence of children's creativity in US, whereas conformity is an indication of one' creativity as well as intelligence in Indian culture. Many developmental psychologists conducted research at The University of Texas at Austin and found that innovation is part of the American culture whereas in the Indian settings innovation is not being encouraged. Children from States are often encouraged to engage in non-conformist and creative behavior but in Indian populations socialization of children is based on fostering collective and cooperative values which motivates them to adhere to social norms (Jennifer M. Clegg, Nicole. J. Wen, & Cristine H. Legare, 2017) [8].

Thus, our hypothesis, "there exists no significant relationship in conformity behaviour and intelligence of secondary school students (i.e. class 9th class +1) is not accepted.

Conformity and Socio-Economic Status

The values in Table 3 indicate that there is positive significant correlation between conformity behaviour and Socio economic status of class 9th students (r = 0.84) as well as class +1 students (r = 0.87) at 0.01 level. It has been found that adults with no college experience were more likely to endorse the high-conforming child on both measures than adults with

higher levels of education, but still less likely than Ni-Vanuatu adults to select the high-conforming child as intelligent. Children's learning environments can differ significantly between high and low socioeconomic families, including parents' beliefs about how children should behave and the extent to which children should be self-directed and independent (Jennifer M. Clegg, Nicole J. Wen, & Cristine H. Legare, 2017) [8].

Hence we can say that conformity behaviour is positively related to Socio-Economic Status of Secondary School Students.

Thus our hypothesis that "there exists no significant relationship in conformity behaviour and socio-economic status of secondary school students" (i.e. class 9th and class +1) is not accepted.

Educational Implications

- Conformity is an important social process for a society to foster values in its citizens. As adolescence is a period of marked change in the persons personality development, they should be presented with suitable examples of conforming behaviour, so as to develop moderate level of conformity in their behaviour, which will help them to obey their elders, respect other's view points and adhere their cultural values.
- The primary aim of education is adjustment, thus right kind of conformity behaviour will help the students to adjust in different environmental situations. The teachers should take the responsibility to make them learn this behaviour by creating the suitable situations.
- The present study indicates that intelligence has positive significant correlation with conformity. So teachers aim at developing intelligence to develop conformity.
- The teachers should aim at providing a positive school climate where the sense of belongingness and connection can help students for developing intelligence.
- Parents should be involved in the process of education as they have no idea about utility and social implications of education. It is necessary to inculcate a new attitude among parents towards the development of conformity behaviour in right manner i.e. where their children should conform and where not.
- Education must not only be theoretical rather real life situations be created and up-to-date methods of educational technology be used.
- Curriculum should be planned according to this need of secondary school students.

Recommendations for The Future

- The present study can also be conducted by taking a large sample on different levels (elementary level, college level, university level).
- Conformity can be studied in relation to some other variables like emotional intelligence, motivation, personality, interest, aggression etc.
- Statistical analysis can also be done by using multivariate techniques.

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