

Children's Conformity: *The Child's Age and Level of Privacy*

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Abstract The present research investigated children's conformity to their peers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the influence of the child's age and the level of privacy on children's conformity was assessed. Conformism in children was proven to exist in Western cultures. When we look at cultural patterns in conformism, it was found that people in collectivistic cultures conform more, than people in individualistic cultures. It was hypothesized that children in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia are highly likely to show conformism, just like children in Western cultures. Conformism is a functioning human tendency, especially in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia. In addition, this research gathered data through experiments in order to answer the research questions, developed after the literature review from western studies and cultural patterns in Saudi Arabia. The current research investigated children's conformity in 76 Saudi children who were divided into two groups. The first group contained about 36 children who were between the ages of 5-6. The second group contained about 40 children who were between 4-5 years old. Also, two arguments that explained the factors will be explored. First, the influences of age on conformity. Second, the influences of the level of privacy of the child's response. The results demonstrate that there is not conformity behavior in children in Saudi Arabia. Further, that there is no relation between age and conformity. Possible reasons for not finding significant results and suggestions for future research are given.

Keywords Children Conformity, Saudi Arabia, conformism, The child's age and level of privacy

1. Introduction

Conformity is an important and well researched phenomenon in social sciences and is important in understanding the influences of group dynamics. It is a behavior that corresponds with socially accepted standards. It is a behavior that is the same as the other person's behavior. Moreover, it is a state of agreeing with or obeying others, even though they do not believe it (Merriam-Webster, 2015). According to Song, Wu, and Li (2012) conformity is defined as adjusting ones attitude or behavior to an object. The object is defined as individuals, groups, organizations or rules. According to McLeod (2007) it is a sort of social influence involving a change in belief or behavior. This change is in response to real or imagined group pressures. It is a sort of social influence involving a change in belief or behavior to fit with a group (McLeod, 2017). Conformity serves several functions in society such as to form certain social norms, so people follow these norms. As a result, the society will function in a good way. In addition, there are several disadvantages, for example when individuals mindlessly obey others, or they do not dare to speak their mind when

they have a different opinion to the opinion of the group. A conducted study by Haun and Tomasello (2011), investigated preschooler's conformity against a unanimous majority. The result indicated that children often conform to their peers, who had made obviously erroneous judgments right before them. There are many interceptions to conform such as social benefit. This means individuals who tend to conform are accepted in society. In contrast, the society will neglect the individuals who do not fit in. Moreover, a study proved the hypothesis that there is a positive relation between conformity and group size (Stang, 1976). So the larger the group, the more people conform. Another study evaluated the effect of peer pressure on conformity among children and emphasized the fact that children change only their public expression of topics not their real judgment (Haun & Tomasello, 2011). In addition to these influences on conformity, another factor is age. It also affects the level of conformity. A study that was done by Walker and Andrade (1996), proved that older children are less inclined to conform to their peers.

Different cultures have different impacts on the conformity phenomena in social science. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991) relatively more individuals in individualistic cultures will hold the view about the self, as an autonomous independent person. However, in collectivistic cultures, the person seeing oneself as not separate from the social context and recognizing that one's

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behavior is determined by the actions of others in the relationship. Saudi Arabia is considered to be a collectivist culture. The societies need is seen as more important than the needs of the individual. It emphasizes the role of selfless, cooperation and communion among the individuals in society. Bond and Smith (1996) proved that individuals attend to conform more in a collectivist culture. The main question in this article is: Do children in Saudi Arabia conform to their peers who make the same erroneous judgments right before them? In addition, what are the factors that influence the level of conformity?

1.1. Research Theme

Over the years there was a debate about the conformity phenomenon in social sciences. It is involved in different aspects of people's lives. Each person has his own personality, feelings, thinking and behaviors. This diversity among people helps to build different domains in societies. However, if each person conforms to the others. As a result societies will stop growing. This is because people will stop improving and depend on one source (e.g. A specific person) for developing the society instead of multiple sources. In addition, people will lose their logic, they will follow the others, even if it is in a wrong domain. Also, it will limit the person's creativity, dreams and goals. This notion does not link to specific age, for example, children have this notion. In order to limit this notion, it is crucial to know the factors that cause it. However, there are no clear factors that cause this notion.

Many research studies have been conducted about conformity among adults. However, not a lot of research has been done about conformity in children. In addition, research about conformism in children has been done in individualistic cultures. So there is a need for knowledge about conformism in children in collectivist cultures. Thus, that is why this article focuses on conformity in children. Moreover, it focuses on factors that influence children's conformity to their peers. The main question in this article is: Do children in Saudi Arabia conform to their peers who make the same erroneous judgments right before them? In addition, what are the factors that influence the level of conformity?

In this article, first the goals will be explored. Second, the factors that influence the level of conformity in children will be explored. Third, the methodology and the result will be discussed. Then, this research will make a conclusion and dissection. Finally, the limitation and recommendations will be explored.

1.2. Research Goals

The goals of this research are to limit the gap of knowledge in the phenomenon of children's conformity in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia and the factors that influence the level of conformity in children. In order to help the researchers in the future to understand the cultural impact on children's conformity. Also, to help in the field of

psychology by limiting the conformity behaviors among children. For example, to educate the children's caregiver about the factors. In order, to control these factors. As a result the children will save their uniqueness in thoughts and behaviors. Also, to help their caregiver to understand the intention of the child's behavior. For example is the child behaving in a particular way just to fit in with the group? As a result, it will help the children's caregiver to deal with them in a correct way. So the children will grow up to be active members in society. Which will improve and develop the society. Our hypotheses are: first, children in Saudi Arabia conform to their peers who make the same erroneous judgments right before them. Second, the older the children were, the less they conformed. Third, children conform much more if their response is public than private.

2. Factors that Influence the Level of Conformity in Children

2.1. Age and Conformity

In this research, in order to answer the research question there will be two arguments that explain the factors that influence the level of conformity in children. First of all, this research will commence with the first argument, which is the influences of age on conformity.

Material and Method

Hamm and Hoving (1969), conducted an experiment about conformity in children. There were 216 participants, at ages 7, 10 and 13 years old. There were comparisons between three groups, the first group contained children at age 7. Also, the second group contained children at age 10 and the third group contained children at age 13. The experiment contained 45 discrete trials. In every trial, the light remained on for 20 seconds and then was switched off for 11 seconds. During the light off period, children made their judgments of both the latency and the magnitude of the auto kinetic movement. Both groups reported their judgments privately by writing it on a pad and pressing a silent telegraph key for the first 15 trials. For the last 30 trials, the control group continued to respond privately. However, the experimental group made their judgments aloud to the experimenter and the telegraph key made a buzzing sound when they pressed it.

First, they escorted the participants in groups of three and seated them individually in cubicles. Second, a set of instructions that were standardized were read. These instructions explained the procedure, for example, there would be a small green spot of light visible directly in front of them. When the light was on the spot would appear to move. So, they should press their telegraph key. Third, after the light went off, they should write down how many inches they thought the spot moved. Finally, the experimenter informed the experimental group of additional instructions. This time children had to say their answer loudly.

Result

They measured the conformity behavior by defining the extent to which the three children in each group agreed with each other's judgments. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the youngest age group and other groups. As a result, the 7-year-old group had significantly higher means than the 10 and 13-year-old age groups. In addition, conformity with aging changes between genders.

2.2. Level of Privacy and Conformity

Now that we knew the first argument, we can look at another argument, which indicated that from a trial to another trial, children adapt their level of conformity to the privacy of their response.

Material and Method

Haum and Tomasello (2011), conducted an experiment about conformity in children. There were 72 four-year-old participants. The experimenter created pictured-books consisting of 30 double pages with different kind of cartoon animals on each. On the left-hand page, three animals were printed on small, medium and large sizes. On the right-hand page, one animal on each page printed on different sizes. In some of the sessions, three of the books were identical and one book was different on the size of the animal on the right-hand page.

Participants completed 30 trials. There were points and speak trials. When a lamp switched on, the children should respond by pointing silently to identify which picture size on the right hand page corresponded with the individual on the left hand page. However, when it switched off, they should respond by saying it aloud. The minority child completed 24 trials in which he or she faced points or speaking trials. In addition to conflict trials, for example, if the child has the same book as others or a different book from other participants. Every child in the majority group completed six trials in which they faced points or speaking trials. In addition, they faced situations where all children had the same book or if the minority child had a different book.

First, children are seated in a row facing the experimenter. Second, the experimenter showed the children the pictured-book. Third, one of the children was assigned to be the minority child by the experimenter. Before the session started, the gender and the booth color were determined for the minor child. Fourth, two children who were not of the predetermined gender were instructed to sit on their booths by the experimenter and the two remaining children were instructed to choose the leftover booths. Fifth, every child was asked individually to respond out loud. This lasted 18 trials, for about 12 of these trials the minority child's book was different from the other children and on six trials all four books were the same. Six children were asked to point silently and this was in the last six trials. In every trial, the minority child responded slightly. Finally, the experimenter states that he accidentally mixed up one of the books and

asked if anyone noticed something strange about his book.

Result

The result was that there were significant differences among children when they are publicly responding than when they are privately responding in conflict trials. So children conform more when they are in speaking conflict trials. Moreover, children were slower to respond in speaking conflict trials. In addition, the level of conformity stayed constant across pointing trials. In addition, there were no significant differences between genders.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Participants. There were 76 participants who were divided into two groups. The Male number was 30 and the Female number was 46. The first group contained about 36 children who were between 5-6 years old. The Male number was 12 and the Female number was 24. The second group contained about 40 children who were between 4-5 years old. The male number was 18 and the Female number was 22. The reason the researcher chose these specific age groups was because at this age the child starts to socialize and gain new friends. He starts to show interest in being part of a group and exert more independence (admin-mdp, 2015). Also, he will have a growing need for approval, that will lead to facing a peer pressure. Thus, it is better to capture his reaction at this point. In order, to highlight it and help him to react in a better way. There were 19 trials, in each trial, there were four children. Participants came from similar backgrounds, they lived in the same city which is Riyadh and spoke the same language which is Arabic. They are all Saudi children, except two. There were not any medical conditions. They are all from the same school, which is called "Princess Noura University Schools".

Material. The tools in this experiment consisted of three matching papers which contained two match pictures (on each paper there were two pictures of the same car). Also, another paper contained two different pictures (on this paper there was one picture of a car and another picture of a duck). The children gathered in a quiet room far from distractions.

Procedure. This experiment replicated an experiment done by Haum and Tomasello (2011) to emphasize children's conformity to their peers in Saudi Arabia. First, the children gathered in a quiet room far from distractions. Second, we divided them into two groups according to their age group and provided instructions to them. Also, we asked each child of her or his name. We started to show them the two papers and asked them which pictures were matching and which pictures were different. Also, they named each picture. Then, we told them that in each trial all the children in the same group will see the same paper and they have to say their answer aloud. In addition, they cannot talk to each other until the end of the experiment. Third, in each age group the

children divided into subgroups of four children. Then we started the experiment. In each subgroup, three children had the same paper which contained two pictures of the same car. Then the experimenter asked each child whether the pictures matched? Then each child said his or her answer aloud respectively. Then, the last child had a different paper, on this paper there was one picture of a car and another picture of a duck. Then the experimenter asked the last child are the pictures matched? Then he or she said his answer aloud.

4. Result

This research uses a correlation design and the significant levels of 0.5 were used for the analysis. The current research investigated children's conformity in 76 Saudi children who were divided into two groups. The first group contained about 36 children who were between 5-6 years old. The second group contained about 40 children who were between 4-5 years old.

They were selected randomly, from every class in a school called, " Princess Noura University Schools". As you can see in the table (1) and figure (1), the sample contains about 60% females and 40% males. So the sample contains more females than males in this study. In addition, as you can see in the table (2) and figure (2), according to age group. The result emphasizes that, there were 52% participants between 4-5 years old and 48% participants between 5-6 years old.

Table (1). Distribution of sample members by type

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Male	30	40.0
	Female	45	60.0
	Total	75	100.0

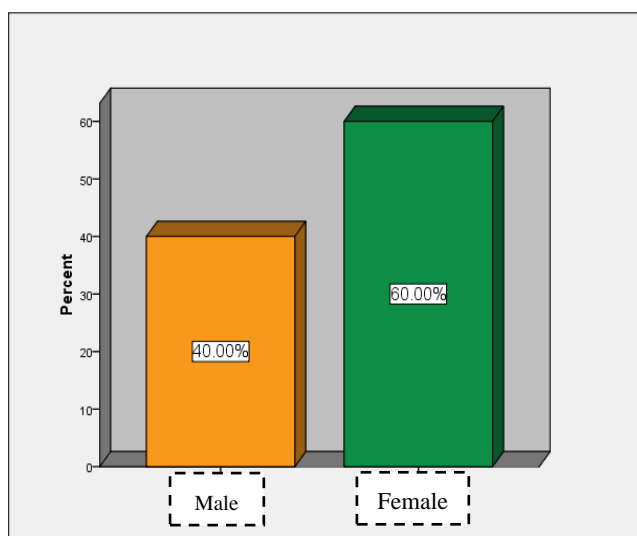


Figure (1).

Table (2). Distribution of sample members of the division of age group

		Frequencies	Percentage
Valid	Years 5-6	36	48.0
	Years 4-5	39	52.0
	Total	75	100.0

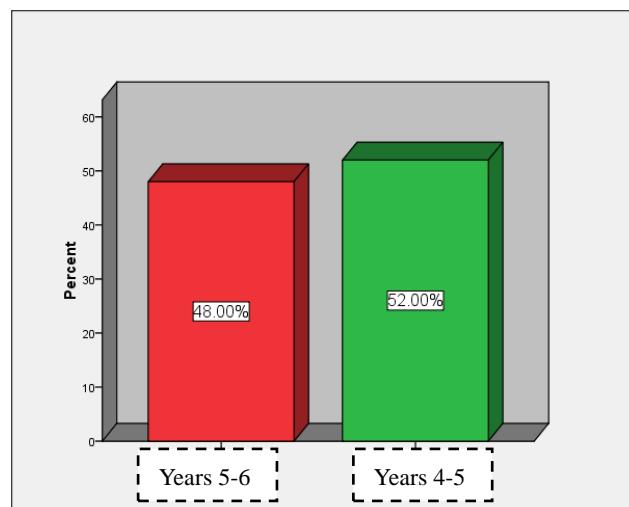


Figure (2).

4.1. Statistical Analysis for Both Groups

Table (3). By using descriptive data sample

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	2	10.5
	No	17	89.5
	Total	19	100.0

ANOVA

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average Squares	F	P-value
Between groups	45.265	1	45.265	1.466	.242
Within groups	524.735	17	30.867		
Total	570.000	18			

In table (3), the result indicates that the children did not conform in 90%. Thus, this means 89.5 did not conform to the other students during the experiments. However, the result emphasizes that children conform in 10%. To prove the hypothesis by using single variance analyses. H0: children did not conform, H1: children did conform. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the Level of Privacy on children's conformity. There was not a significant effect of Level of Privacy on children's conformity at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1, 17) = 1.466$ $p = .242$]. By using ANOVAs, the results proved that the P-value is 0.242. So it

is bigger than the level of moral (0.05). Thus, if the value is greater than the value of alpha (α), the result has a non-significant effect. This means that we should accept the Null hypothesis that proves that children did not conform. Taken together, these results suggest that the Level of Privacy has no effect on children's conformity.

4.2. Statistical Analysis for Each Group

As you can see in the table (4), the first group who were from age 5-6 years, were 47% of the total sample. The second group who were from 4-5 years old were 53% of the total sample. To prove our hypothesis H_0 , conformity did not decrease with age. H_1 : conformity did decrease with age. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of children's age on children's conformity. "There was a non-significant effect of children's age on children's conformity at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1, 17) = 2.013$ $p = .174$]. By using ANOVAs, the results prove that the P-value is 0.174. So it is bigger than the level of moral (0.05), this means that we should accept the Null hypothesis that proves that conformity did not decrease with age. Taken together, these results suggest that children's age has no effect on children's conformity.

Table (4). Distribution of sample members of the division of age group

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	First group	9	47.4
	Second group	10	52.6
	Total	19	100.0

ANOVA

	Sum of square	Degrees of freedom	Average squares	F	p-value
Between groups	.502	1	.502	2.013	.174
Within groups	4.235	17	.249		
Total	4.737	18			

5. Discussion and Conclusions

An important phenomenon in the world is conformity. It is a powerful human tendency to align attitudes or behaviors to others. Much research is needed about children's conformity in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia and about the factors that influence the levels of conformity in children. In order to get a more precise picture, the present research investigated children's conformity in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Also, gathered information about the factors that influence the level of conformity in children. The research question in this literature review was: Do children in Saudi Arabia conform to their peers who make the same erroneous judgments right before them? In addition, what are the factors that influence the levels of conformity? The implications of this article are to limit the gaps in knowledge in the phenomenon of children's conformity in collectivistic

cultures and the factors that influence the level of conformity in children.

The first argument is the influences of age on conformity. The result shows that the seven-year-old group had significantly higher means than the 10 and 13-year-old groups. This indicates that the seven-year-old group conform much more than the 10 and 13-year-old groups. Moreover, this proved that older children are less inclined to conform to their peers than the younger children. In addition, conformity with aging changes between genders. This reveals that females conform more than males and that the change in conformity with age is much greater for males than females. So seven-year-old males conform much less than females, but by the age of 13 both sexes conform at approximately the same level. This finding is consistent with prior studies that emphasized that conformity decreases with age in perceptual unambiguous tasks (Walker & Andrade, 1996). An explanation of this finding concludes that the desire for peer approval is also thought to increase with age. So conformity decreases with age, while the need for peer approval increases. As a result, on unambiguous tasks this produces an increasing conflict with age between the participants' desire to be objectively correct and the child's desire to agree with the group. So the result shows that the participants choose to be objectively correct so they will conform less in order to get approval from peers when they are correct.

The second argument is the level of privacy of the child's response which indicated that from a trial to another trial, children adapt their level of conformity to the privacy of their response. The result shows there were significant differences among children when they are publicly responding than when they are privately responding in speaking conflict trials. Moreover, children conform much more if their response is public (speak) than when it is private (point). Therefore, this supports the notion that children adapt their level of conformity to the privacy of their response. In addition, females and males conform approximately on the same level.

This research indicates that in the total sample, the children did not conform in 90%. However, the result emphasizes that children conform in 10. By using ANOVAs, the results prove that the P-value is 0.242, this means that children in Saudi Arabia did not conform to their peers who made the same erroneous judgments right before them. In addition, this research proves that conformity did not decrease with age. By using ANOVAs, the results prove that conformity did not decrease with age. So a child's age will not influence the child's conformity behavior. This means age is not a factor that influences the level of conformity in children.

In conclusion, this research gives an overview of the existing theory and more direction for future research about children's conformity in Saudi Arabia and about the factors that influence the level of conformity in children. In addition, it demonstrates that there is not conformity behavior in children in Saudi Arabia. Further, that there is not a relation between age and conformity.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

There were several limitations of the experiment. The children came from the same school, which makes them more familiar to each other. So this could make them more willing to give the right answer and less willing to conform. Also, the cultural impact of Saudi Arabia that sees the societies need as more important than the needs of the individual. However, the cultural impact could also enhance the individual creativity and self-confidence. Further, the true motivations that influence the level of conformity in children remain unclear. Moreover, in the second argument the reason that makes children conform more in public than private is still unclear. In addition, in the second argument the participant's ages were four years old. So more research should be done with different age groups in the future.

In the future, more research should be done with more participants and with convergent age ranges. Also, more experiments will have to dissect more factors. For example, what the relation is between group size and conformity in children. Research could also consider more about the relation between children's conformity and peer approval.

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