

PROMINENT PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS AND THEIR PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE

Dr. Abhimanyu R. Dhormare
Associate Professor & Head
Department of Psychology
Babuji Avhad Mahavidyalaya,
Pathardi, Dist. Ahilyanagar, MS (India)
ardcanada@gmail.com

Abstract

This comprehensive paper explores various psychological phenomena, including learned helplessness, observational learning, the bystander effect, delayed gratification, classical conditioning, obedience to authority, and conformity. These concepts have far-reaching implications for understanding human behaviour in various contexts, including education, organizations, relationships, and public policy. Learned helplessness can lead to decreased motivation and performance in academic settings, workplaces, and personal relationships. Observational learning, as demonstrated by the Bobo Doll Experiment, highlights the impact of media and role models on behaviour. The bystander effect shows how individuals are less likely to help in emergencies when in groups, while the Marshmallow Test emphasizes the importance of delayed gratification in achieving success. Classical conditioning, as seen in the Little Albert Experiment, can shape phobias and anxiety, but also has therapeutic applications. The Milgram Experiment demonstrates the dangers of blind obedience to authority, while the Asch Experiment shows the power of social influence and conformity. These phenomena have significant implications for promoting critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and positive behaviours in various contexts. By understanding these concepts, individuals and organizations can develop strategies to foster resilience, creativity, and responsible behaviour. Overall, this research paper highlights the importance of psychological research in understanding human behaviour and promoting positive outcomes in various aspects of life.

Introduction

Psychology has long been fascinated by the complexities of human behaviour, with numerous experiments shedding light on the intricacies of our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Prominent studies like the Bobo Doll Experiment, the Bystander Effect, the Marshmallow Test, the Little Albert Experiment, the Milgram Experiment, Stanford Prison Experiment, Hawthorne Effect, Cognitive Dissonance, the Monkey Drug Trials and the Asch Experiment have significantly advanced our understanding of observational learning, social influence, delayed gratification, classical conditioning, obedience to authority, and conformity. These groundbreaking studies have far-reaching implications, informing strategies to promote positive behaviours, prevent harm, and foster critical thinking and ethical decision-making in various contexts, including education, organizations, relationships, and public policy, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the human condition and the development of interventions to improve individual and societal well-being.

In this research paper, some such important and milestone experiments in psychology have been analysed and it has been discussed how the findings of those experiments can be applied in different contexts of daily life.

Selective psychological experiments and their practical applications in the everyday life

1. *Learned Helplessness: A Phenomenon Across Various Contexts:*

Learned helplessness is a psychological phenomenon where individuals perceive a lack of control over their environment, leading to decreased motivation, performance, and overall well-being (Seligman & Maier, 1967). This concept has been observed in various contexts, including academic settings, workplaces, relationships, personal health and habits, and political and social contexts.

Practical Applications of the Learned Helplessness

1. **Academic Settings:** In academic settings, learned helplessness can manifest in students who experience repeated failures or setbacks. For instance, a student who consistently struggles with math tests may develop the belief that they are incapable of succeeding in math, leading to disengagement and further poor performance (Dweck, 2000). This can result in giving up easily, refusal to accept help, and a general decline in academic motivation.
2. **Workplace:** In the workplace, learned helplessness can arise from micromanagement, lack of autonomy, and rigid hierarchical structures. Employees who feel undervalued, overcontrolled, or unable to influence decision-making processes may experience feelings of helplessness, leading to reduced productivity, increased burnout, and decreased job satisfaction (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).
3. **Relationships:** Learned helplessness can also be observed in relationships, particularly in situations of domestic violence or unhealthy relationship dynamics. Victims of abuse may develop a sense of helplessness, believing they cannot escape their situation, even when help is available (Walker, 1979). Similarly, individuals in unhealthy relationships may become passive and accept mistreatment, believing they are unable to improve the situation.
4. **Personal Health and Habits:** In the context of personal health and habits, learned helplessness can manifest in individuals who experience repeated setbacks or failures. For example, individuals who struggle with weight loss may develop the belief that weight loss is impossible, leading to giving up on healthy habits (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, individuals struggling with addiction may feel helpless and unable to quit, leading to continued substance use despite negative consequences.
5. **Political and Social Contexts:** Finally, learned helplessness can also be observed in political and social contexts. Individuals who feel their votes or opinions don't matter may become disengaged from the political process, believing that their actions are futile (Klandermans, 1997). Similarly, individuals who witness repeated failures in efforts to address social issues may develop a sense of helplessness, believing that change is impossible.

2. *The Bobo Doll Experiment: Understanding Observational Learning*

The Bobo Doll Experiment, conducted by Albert Bandura (1961), demonstrated the power of observational learning in shaping behaviour. In the experiment, children observed an adult model behaving aggressively towards a Bobo doll, and later, they were given the opportunity to play with the doll themselves. The results showed that children who observed the aggressive model were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour towards the doll.

Practical Applications of the Bobo Doll Experiment

1. **Media Influence:** The Bobo Doll Experiment highlights the potential impact of violent media content on children's behaviour. Research has shown that exposure to aggression in movies, television, or video games can increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour in viewers (Bushman & Huesmann, 2006). For example, a study found that children who watched violent cartoons were more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour towards their peers (Christakis & Zimmerman, 2007).
2. **Parenting and Role Modelling:** Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in shaping children's behaviour through their own actions and interactions. The experiment emphasizes the importance of modelling positive behaviours and providing a supportive environment that encourages empathy, cooperation, and non-violent conflict resolution (Hart & Risley, 1995). For instance, parents who model kindness and respect towards others are more likely to have children who exhibit similar behaviours.
3. **Education:** Educators can use the principles of observational learning to create learning environments that promote positive social skills and behaviours. By modelling desired behaviours and providing opportunities for students to observe and imitate positive interactions, educators can foster a more positive and supportive learning environment (Webster-Stratton, 2018). For example, teachers can model empathy and kindness towards students, which can encourage students to exhibit similar behaviours towards their peers.
4. **Bullying and Aggression:** The experiment sheds light on the dynamics of bullying and aggression, suggesting that witnessing aggression can normalize and encourage such behaviours. It emphasizes the importance of addressing bullying and aggression in schools, workplaces, and homes, and promoting positive alternatives to conflict resolution (Olweus, 2003). For instance, schools can implement anti-bullying programs that promote empathy, kindness, and respect towards others.
5. **Domestic Violence:** The experiment can help explain how children who witness domestic violence may be more likely to display violent behaviour themselves, as they have learned to view aggression as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). For example, children who witness their parents engaging in physical violence may be more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour towards their peers.
6. **Public Policy:** Understanding the impact of observational learning can inform public policy decisions related to media content, education, and social interventions aimed at preventing violence and promoting positive behaviours. For instance, policymakers can implement regulations to reduce exposure to violent media content, or provide funding for programs that promote positive behaviours and conflict resolution skills.

3. **The Bystander Effect: Understanding the Power of Intervention**

The bystander effect is a phenomenon where individuals are less likely to help someone in distress when they are in a group of people. This concept has been observed in various contexts, including crimes and emergencies, workplace scenarios, and everyday situations.

Practical Applications of the Bystander Effect

1. **Crimes and Emergencies:** (1) **Fights and Assaults:** Bystanders may record a fight on their phones instead of intervening or seeking help (Levine et al., 2011). For example, in 2019, a video of a violent assault went viral on social media, sparking widespread outrage and debate about the bystander effect. (2) **Cyberbullying:** Individuals may witness cyberbullying incidents but fail to report them or intervene, fearing social repercussions (Hertz et al., 2017). For instance, a study found that 70% of students had witnessed

cyberbullying, but only 30% reported it (Hertz et al., 2017). (3) Someone Falling Down: In a crowded area, people may be less likely to help someone who has fallen down, assuming someone else will assist (Darley & Latané, 1968). For example, in a busy shopping mall, a person may fall and injure themselves, but bystanders may not intervene, assuming someone else will help.

2. Workplace Scenarios: Ignoring Workplace Issues: Employees may be aware of problems or unethical behaviour but hesitate to report them, fearing negative consequences or social repercussions (Miceli & Near, 2002). For instance, a study found that 40% of employees had witnessed wrongdoing in the workplace, but only 50% reported it (Miceli & Near, 2002).
3. Everyday Situations: Someone Dropping Something: In a crowded place, people are less likely to help someone who has dropped something, assuming someone else will (Levine et al., 2011). For example, on a busy street, someone may drop their groceries, but bystanders may not help, assuming someone else will.
4. Helping Behaviour: (1) Increased Willingness to Help: People are more likely to help when they are alone or in a small group, as they feel a greater sense of personal responsibility (Darley & Latané, 1968). For instance, a study found that people were more likely to help someone in distress when they were alone than when they were in a group (Darley & Latané, 1968). (2) The "5 Ds of Bystander Intervention": The University of Auckland suggests strategies like Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct to encourage bystander intervention (University of Auckland, n.d.).
5. Situational Awareness: Recognizing the Bystander Effect: Being aware of the bystander effect can help individuals recognize situations where intervention may be needed and increase their willingness to help (Levine et al., 2011).
6. Promoting Helping Behaviour: (1) Encouraging Action: Highlighting the importance of taking action, even in ambiguous situations, can help overcome the bystander effect (Levine et al., 2011). (2) Training and Education: Providing training and education on the bystander effect and bystander intervention techniques can empower individuals to take action in emergencies (University of Auckland, n.d.).

4. The Marshmallow Test: Understanding Delayed Gratification

The Marshmallow Test, a classic psychological study by Walter Mischel (1972), demonstrates the importance of delayed gratification in various aspects of life. The test showed that children who could delay gratification and wait for a second marshmallow were more likely to have better life outcomes.

Practical Applications of the Marshmallow test

1. Education and Academic Pursuits: (1) Delayed Gratification: Students who learn to delay gratification are more likely to achieve better grades and academic success (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). For example, a student who resists the temptation to play video games and instead focuses on studying is more likely to achieve academic success. (2) Focus and Concentration: Developing self-control helps students stay focused during class and resist distractions, leading to better learning outcomes (Tangney et al., 2004). (3) Goal Setting and Perseverance: The Marshmallow Test demonstrates the importance of setting long-term goals and working diligently towards them, even when faced with immediate temptations (Mischel, 2014).

2. Career Development: (1) Long-Term Goals: Career success often hinges on setting long-term goals and working towards them, requiring self-control and delayed gratification (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). For instance, a professional who sets a long-term goal to become a manager and works towards it, despite immediate challenges, is more likely to achieve career advancement. (2) Resisting Instant Gratification: Professionals who can resist the urge to take shortcuts or settle for less than they deserve are more likely to achieve career advancement (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001).
3. Personal Finance: (1) Saving and Investing: Learning to delay gratification is crucial for sound financial planning, including saving for retirement and investing for the future (Ameriks et al., 2007). For example, an individual who delays gratification and saves for retirement is more likely to have a secure financial future. (2) Avoiding Impulse Purchases: Self-control helps individuals resist impulse spending and make more responsible financial decisions (Vohs & Faber, 2007).
4. Health and Well-being: (1) Healthy Lifestyle Choices: Making healthy food choices and engaging in regular exercise requires self-control and the ability to delay immediate gratification (Hagger et al., 2010). For instance, an individual who resists the temptation to eat unhealthy foods and instead chooses a balanced diet is more likely to maintain good health. (2) Stress Management: Developing self-control can help individuals manage stress and make better choices in challenging situations (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).
5. Relationships: (1) Patience and Understanding: Building strong relationships require patience, understanding, and the ability to prioritize others' needs over one's own desires (Gilliland & Dunn, 2003). For example, a partner who practices patience and understanding is more likely to build a strong and healthy relationship. (2) Conflict Resolution: Self-control is essential for resolving conflicts constructively and maintaining healthy relationships (Tangney et al., 2004).

5. The Little Albert Experiment: Understanding Classical Conditioning

The Little Albert Experiment, conducted by John B. Watson and Rosalie Rayner (1920), demonstrated the power of classical conditioning in shaping human behaviour. In the experiment, a young child, known as Little Albert, was conditioned to associate a neutral stimulus (a white rat) with a loud noise, leading to a fear response.

Practical Applications of the Little Albert Experiment

1. Understanding and Treating Phobias and Anxiety: (1) Conditioned Fear: The experiment showed that fear responses can be learned through association, which is a key principle in understanding how phobias and anxiety disorders develop (Watson & Rayner, 1920). For example, a person who associates a specific object or situation with a traumatic experience may develop a phobia. (2) Therapeutic Applications: This understanding led to the development of therapeutic techniques like systematic desensitization and exposure therapy, which aim to gradually expose individuals to feared stimuli in a controlled environment, helping them overcome their conditioned fear responses (Wolpe, 1969). For instance, a person with a fear of spiders can be gradually exposed to pictures of spiders, then to spiders in a terrarium, and eventually to real spiders in a controlled environment.
2. Advertising and Consumer Behaviour: Associative Learning: The principles of classical conditioning can be used to influence consumer behaviour by associating products with positive stimuli, such as admired figures or pleasant experiences (Gorn, 1982). For

example, a company might feature a celebrity in their advertisement, hoping that consumers will associate the product with the celebrity's positive image.

3. Ethical Considerations: The "Little Albert" experiment raised serious ethical concerns due to the potential harm inflicted on the infant, lack of informed consent, and the failure to decondition the fear (Harris, 1979). Today, ethical guidelines in psychological research are much stricter, emphasizing the importance of informed consent, minimizing harm, and ensuring the well-being of participants (American Psychological Association, 2017).

6. The Milgram Experiment: Understanding Obedience and Authority

The Milgram Experiment, conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963), demonstrated the power of obedience to authority and the willingness of individuals to follow orders, even when it conflicts with their moral values. The experiment has far-reaching implications for understanding human behaviour in various contexts.

Practical Applications of the Milgram Experiment

1. Understanding and Preventing Abuses of Authority: (1) Holocaust and Other Atrocities: Milgram's research helps explain how ordinary people can be coerced into participating in horrific acts when following orders, as seen in the Holocaust and other historical events (Milgram, 1963). For example, the Nuremberg trials highlighted the role of obedience in perpetuating atrocities. (2) War Crimes and Military Obedience: The experiment highlights the danger of blind obedience in military contexts, underscoring the need for critical thinking and ethical training for soldiers (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). For instance, the My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam War is often cited as an example of the dangers of blind obedience. (3) Corporate Scandals and Ethical Failures: Milgram's findings can be applied to understand how corporate structures and cultures can lead to unethical behaviour, emphasizing the importance of accountability and ethical leadership (Brief et al., 2000).
2. Promoting Ethical Decision-Making and Moral Courage: (1) Education and Training: Incorporating lessons from the Milgram experiment into educational curricula can help individuals become more aware of the influence of authority and the importance of ethical reasoning (Milgram, 1974). For example, business ethics courses can use the Milgram experiment to illustrate the dangers of blind obedience. (2) Leadership and Organizational Culture: Leaders can use the lessons of the experiment to create organizational cultures that encourage critical thinking, questioning authority, and standing up for what is right (Haslam et al., 2014).
3. Informing Organizational Structures and Processes: (1) Military Training: The US Army, for example, now incorporates Milgram's findings into its education of officers to illuminate the issue of following unethical orders (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). (2) Corporate Ethics Programs: Companies can use the lessons of the experiment to develop more robust ethics programs that address the potential for blind obedience and promote ethical decision-making (Treviño et al., 2014).

7. The Asch Experiment: Understanding Conformity and Social Influence

The Asch Experiment, conducted by Solomon Asch in 1951, demonstrated the power of social influence and conformity in shaping individual behaviour. In the experiment, participants were asked to judge the length of lines, and confederates intentionally provided incorrect answers. The results showed that many participants conformed to the group's incorrect answers, even when they knew the correct answer.

Practical Applications of the Asch Experiment

1. **Understanding Peer Pressure:** (1) In Education: Teachers can use the insights from the Asch experiment to create classroom environments that encourage critical thinking and independent judgment, rather than simply conforming to peer pressure (Asch, 1951). For example, educators can encourage open discussions and debates to foster critical thinking skills. (2) In Organizations: Leaders and managers can foster a culture that values diverse viewpoints and encourages dissent, reducing the risk of groupthink and promoting more informed decision-making (Janis, 1972).
2. **Recognizing Groupthink:** (1) In Decision-Making: The Asch experiment highlights the importance of considering diverse perspectives and avoiding situations where a group might be swayed by a dominant opinion, even if it's incorrect (Asch, 1951). For instance, organizations can use devil's advocacy to encourage critical thinking and challenge assumptions. (2) In Politics: Understanding the Asch effect can help individuals critically evaluate information and avoid blindly accepting opinions or beliefs simply because they are popular (Kuran, 1995).
3. **Promoting Critical Thinking and Independent Judgment:** (1) In Education: By encouraging open discussions and valuing diverse perspectives, educators can help students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to make independent judgments (Paul & Elder, 2006). (2) In Organizations: Leaders can create safe spaces for employees to express their opinions and challenge the status quo, fostering innovation and creativity (Amabile, 1993).
4. **Addressing Social Issues:** (1) In Public Policy: Understanding the dynamics of conformity can help policymakers develop strategies to address social issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and political polarization (Kuran, 1995). (2) In social media: Being aware of the power of social influence can help individuals resist the urge to conform to trends or opinions presented by social media platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Conclusions:

1. **Learned helplessness can have far-reaching consequences:** Across various contexts, including education, workplaces, relationships, and personal health, learned helplessness can lead to decreased motivation, performance, and overall well-being.
2. **Observational learning shapes behaviour:** The Bobo Doll Experiment highlights the significance of role models and observational learning in shaping behaviour, with implications for media influence, parenting, education, and public policy.
3. **The bystander effect can be mitigated:** Understanding the bystander effect and promoting situational awareness, encouraging action, and providing training on bystander intervention techniques can empower individuals to take action in emergencies.
4. **Delayed gratification is crucial for success:** The Marshmallow Test demonstrates the importance of self-control and delayed gratification in achieving academic, career, and personal success, as well as maintaining healthy relationships and financial stability.
5. **Classical conditioning can shape human behaviour:** The Little Albert Experiment shows how classical conditioning can lead to the development of phobias and anxiety disorders, with implications for therapeutic techniques and advertising strategies.
6. **Obedience to authority can have negative consequences:** The Milgram Experiment highlights the dangers of blind obedience and the importance of promoting critical

thinking, ethical decision-making, and moral courage in various contexts, including military, corporate, and educational settings.

7. Conformity and social influence can impact individual behaviour: The Asch Experiment demonstrates the power of social influence and conformity, emphasizing the need to promote critical thinking, independent judgment, and diverse perspectives in education, organizations, and public policy.

References

- Ameriks, J., Caplin, A., & Leahy, J. (2007). Retirement consumption: Insights from a survey. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 28(5), 571-587.
- Asch, S. E. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 46(4), 558-565.
- Bandura, A. (1961). Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 575-582.
- Brief, A. P., Buttram, R. T., & Dukerich, J. M. (2000). *Collective corruption in the corporate world: Toward a process model*. In M. E. Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work: Theory and research* (pp. 471-497). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. (2006). *Media violence and societal violence*. In J. G. Coyne & M. A. Crary (Eds.), *The psychology of aggression* (pp. 227-244). New York: Guilford Press.
- Christakis, D. A., & Zimmerman, F. J. (2007). Violent television viewing during preschool and school readiness. *Pediatrics*, 120(4), e772-e778.
- Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8(4), 377-383.
- Gilliland, S. E., & Dunn, J. (2003). Social influence and social change in the context of social identity theory. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59(3), 647-665.
- Gorn, G. J. (1982). The effects of music in advertising on choice behaviour: A classical conditioning approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(1), 94-101.
- Hagger, M. S., Wood, C., Stiff, C., & Chatzisarantis, N. L. D. (2010). Ego depletion and the strength model of self-control: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(4), 495-525.
- Hertz, M., Jelen, A. E., & Wilfert, K. (2017). Cyberbullying and the bystander effect: An analysis of the relationship between witnessing cyberbullying and intervening. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 75, 736-744.
- Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Levine, M., Cassidy, C., & Russo, R. (2011). To what extent do bystanders intervene in a naturally occurring aggressive conflict? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 41(11), 2621-2642.
- Margolin, G., & Gordis, E. B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 445-467.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2017). *Burnout: A multidimensional perspective*. In C. L. Cooper & E. A. Lock (Eds.), *The handbook of stress, health, and performance* (pp. 143-165). New York: Routledge.
- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioural study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 371-378.
- Mischel, W. (2014). *The marshmallow test: Mastering self-control*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Olweus, D. (2003). A profile of bullying at school. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 12-17.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2006). *The art of argument: Discovering, exploring, and developing strong critical thinking skills*. Critical Thinking Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Maier, S. F. (1967). Failure to escape traumatic shock. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 74(1), 1-9.
- Treviño, L. K., den Nieuwenboer, N. A., & Kish-Gephart, J. J. (2014). (Un)Ethical behaviour in organizations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 635-660.
- Watson, J. B., & Rayner, R. (1920). Conditioned emotional reactions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Wolpe, J. (1969). *The practice of behaviour therapy*. Pergamon Press.