

# obedience to authority stanley milgram

**Obedience to Authority: Stanley Milgram** is a term that has become synonymous with the psychological exploration of authority and conformity. The experiments conducted by social psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s provided profound insights into human behavior, illustrating how ordinary people can commit acts that conflict with their personal morals when instructed by an authority figure. This article delves into the background of Milgram's research, the methodology of his experiments, the findings, implications, and the ongoing relevance of his work in understanding obedience.

## Background of Milgram's Research

In the aftermath of World War II, there was a growing concern about how ordinary individuals could commit heinous acts under the influence of authority. The trial of Adolf Eichmann, a key organizer of the Holocaust, raised pressing questions about obedience and morality. Milgram, influenced by these events and the works of other psychologists, sought to investigate the extent to which individuals would follow orders that contradicted their ethical beliefs.

## Theoretical Framework

Milgram's research was grounded in several key psychological theories:

1. **Social Influence:** The principle that individuals often change their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in response to the presence or actions of others.
2. **Cognitive Dissonance:** The psychological discomfort experienced when one's beliefs clash with their actions, often leading individuals to justify their behavior.
3. **Authority:** The concept that people are more likely to comply with requests or commands from figures perceived to have legitimate power.

## Methodology of Milgram's Experiments

Milgram's experiments took place at Yale University in 1961. The setup involved three key roles: the experimenter (authority figure), the teacher (participant), and the learner (actor). Participants believed they were part of a study on learning and memory, which masked the true purpose of the experiment.

## Experimental Design

1. **Participants:** A total of 40 male participants aged between 20 to 50 years were recruited through advertisements, offering monetary compensation for their involvement.

## 2. Procedure:

- Participants were introduced to the learner (who was actually an actor) and were told they would be administering electric shocks to him for incorrect answers.
- The shocks were not real, but the participant was led to believe they were, with a range from 15

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What was the main objective of Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments?**

The main objective was to investigate the extent to which individuals would follow orders from an authority figure, even when those orders involved causing harm to another person.

## **What were the key findings of Milgram's study on obedience?**

Milgram found that a significant majority of participants were willing to administer what they believed were painful electric shocks to others when instructed by an authority figure, demonstrating a high level of obedience.

## **How did Milgram's experiments challenge previous assumptions about human behavior?**

Milgram's experiments challenged the assumption that people would inherently resist harming others, showing instead that situational factors and authority can heavily influence individuals to act against their moral beliefs.

## **What ethical concerns have been raised regarding Milgram's obedience experiments?**

Ethical concerns include the psychological stress inflicted on participants, the deception involved in the study, and the potential long-term effects of believing they had harmed others, which has led to stricter ethical guidelines in psychological research.

## **How do Milgram's findings relate to contemporary issues of authority and compliance?**

Milgram's findings remain relevant as they provide insight into how ordinary individuals can commit acts of aggression or unethical behavior under the influence of authority, which can be observed in various contexts like military conduct, corporate environments, and even political systems.

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