Mini Research Papers

The history of experiments on human behavior

Man and the features of his personality for more than one century have been the object of interest and study of the great minds of mankind. From the very beginning of the development of psychological science to the present day, people have managed to develop and substantially improve their skills in this difficult but exciting business. Therefore, now to obtain reliable data in the study of the peculiarities of the human psyche and his personality, people use a large number of very different methods and methods of research in psychology. One of the methods that have received the most popularity and have proven themselves from the practical side is a psychological experiment.

Separate examples of the most famous, interesting and even anti-humane and shocking social and psychological experiments that were conducted on people, we decided to consider regardless of the general material, because of their importance and significance. But at the beginning of this part of our course we will once again recall what a psychological experiment is and what its features are, and also briefly touch on the types and characteristics of the experiment. There are many major experiments in psychology but some have marked the minds more than others. They have often triggered controversies as they seemed revealing actions and human and / or animal reactions.

Psychology is considered "soft science" as opposed to hard sciences such as physics or mathematics because it does not rely on advanced formalisms. It does, however, provide powerful insights into our behaviors and relationships. Some of the most interesting experiments in the history of psychology are discussed as below: In 1954, at the Robbers Cave Park in Oklahoma, USA, researcher Muzafer Sherif took two groups of 11-year-old boys for a long excursion. Her experience consisted in showing how, very quickly, group identity was formed and how it could lead to antagonism and violence towards excluded members of the group. The first experiment led the boys to group together (Aronson, Wilson, & Brewer, 1998). The second led the groups to confront each other and the third to the resolution of the conflicts by solving a common problem. Performed on minors and on a small scale, this experiment led to controversy but also demonstrated our deeply gregarious attitude.

The Stanford University Jail experiment. This experience has returned to the forefront with the recent events of Abu Ghraib (torture of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers). It is the brainchild of Philip Zimbardo, who arbitrarily divided two groups of students from Stanford University for a role play: a group of prisoners and a group of guards. The experiment had to be quickly interrupted because the "games" turned to humiliation and practically to torture (Martin, 2007). This remarkable experience has had the merit of showing that the evil is in each of us and requires only a favorable environment for the drives to materialize.

Milgram experiment was conducted in 1961 by Stanley Milgram, a psychologist. Its essence was to find out how far people are willing to follow the authority figures, even knowing that their actions can harm others. The subjects were asked to play the role of a teacher who, with every mistake the student struck, was shocked. As students there were actors who specifically gave the wrong answers. With each wrong answer, the discharge became stronger, and the actors portrayed a monstrous pain. Many subjects continued to follow the orders of the experimenter, despite the requests of the students (Huey, 1898).

To conclude, people have long been trying to find an explanation of why a person, in a given situation, behaves in a certain way. However, experimental psychology gained its active development only in the last century. With the help of experiments, scientists managed to understand a lot about the features of human psychology. Some of them are the most unusual and unexpected features of human behavior in certain situations.

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The importance of Scientific Method

The scientific method is a set of ordered steps that allow us to obtain new knowledge. It is absolutely important because it allows us to obtain demonstrable knowledge and make controlled discoveries that lead to the development of theories that can be applied in the development of humanity. Not all knowledge we have about the world that surrounds us can be considered as scientific knowledge, since popular knowledge often has to have a demonstration that indicates otherwise, or that it can explain why certain phenomena occur, and it is precisely This is what science is responsible for, with its different disciplines.

It is a set of ordered steps used by science to find new knowledge. It should be based on empirical and measurement and should be subject to the principles of reasoning tests. It is a method that has characterized the natural science that consists of systematic observation, experimentation, measurement, formulation, analysis and modification of hypotheses. If the scientific method did not exist neither would the science given that no data would be presented with the character of truth (those that make up science) because there would be no way to grant them this characteristic.

The scientific method allows the creation of laws that encompass a huge amount of phenomena that occur in the world and is applied in all branches that make up science.This method is supported by two pillars: Reproducibility: The ability to repeat an experiment in any place and person. It bases the communication and publication of the results and their verification by the scientific community. Refutability: Any scientific proportion can be refuted. The scientific method rejects absolute truths (Wallach, et.al. 2018).

The scientific method aims to produce new knowledge in a reliable manner following an ordered series of steps. These steps minimize the influence of the subjectivity of the scientist in the work, this reinforces the validity of the results and the knowledge produced. The scientific method covers the practices used and ratified by the scientific community as valid to expose and confirm theories. Theories can be supported or not in experiments that confirm their validity, this means that the use of experiments is not synonymous with the scientific method. The sciences have different fields of application, but all have in common that, to produce scientific laws and new knowledge to predict the behavior of scientific phenomena, we have a specific system known as Scientific Method (Rosenberg, 2018).

This method is important not only because it offers verifiable and valid knowledge, but also allows for scientific laws that allow new discoveries and experiments that lead to the development of humanity. It also makes it possible to guarantee the safety of the experiments, since it provides a specific order and a systematization that guarantees its reproducibility and that seeks to minimize the margin of error.

The scientific method is used to generate knowledge, but, it is not considered infallible by scientists but as a method to achieve the validity of knowledge. The scientific method attempts to minimalize the effect of the bias that the experimenter may have. Even scientists with their best intentions can be partial. This is a consequence of personal beliefs and social principles, which means that any human being filters information based on their own experiences, knowledge and beliefs (Ellen, et.al. 2018). The scientific method is a rigorous observation; it is a procedure to produce scientific knowledge. Its objective is to investigate and demonstrate certain issues / hypotheses. It is important because it tests and discards some conjectures, hints, issues, hypotheses, it does not remain in thesis without foundations or verifiable supports. It is the opposite of the empirical method, in which everything is based on experience, without intervention of the scientific processes adopted.

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Summarize a case and why the findings are significant

Asch conformity experiment was conducted in the mid-50s of the twentieth century and is aimed at identifying conformity i.e. the tendency to obey the majority when expressing one’s opinion. In fact, conformity manifests itself in the case of the group's influence on the individual, therefore, the experiment of S. Asch can be attributed to experiments related to the manipulation of the subject's mind. The experiment was that the subject had to estimate the length of three lines. In addition to the subject, several other people who were students of Ash and dummy actors had to do the same exercise. After the response of the subject (the length of the lines was obvious), all the students in turn gave a deliberately false, identical answer.

According to the results of the experiment, three quarters of the subjects finally agreed with the group’s opinion at least once (Zhang, & Wright, 2018). Most of the participants in an interview after the experiment confessed their disbelief in their conformist responses. The experiment demonstrates the socio-psychological mechanism of human dependence, even in those conditions when he is clearly aware of his rightness and the mistakes of others. And also is the fact of manipulation of human behavior. According to ethical standards, should reveal to the subject his deception caused by the essence of the experiment, thereby bringing the subject psychological discomfort, declaring it a credulous conformist.

In the experiments we considered, the organizers resolved questions about their professional competence, reliability and validity of the methods. However, the conclusions, the results of the experiment, later voiced by the participants, caused their psychological discomfort. Perhaps other people, not being direct participants, are experiencing it to the same extent. This fact is common to ambiguous psychological experiments, including less scandalous ones. In these experiments, the question arises about the legality and ethical nature of significant interventions in the mind and behavior of a person. In the prison experiment, the participants were imprisoned and mistreated. In the experiment of S. Milgram, the subject was placed in a situation of choice between duty and compassion, while some of the participants were confident that they had killed a person. The consciousness of this fact is most likely a lifelong psychological trauma (Bond, & Smith, 1996). How can you measure the effect of such stress on the participant? Do the predictions have consequences for a participant who now knows that for the sake of science and under the pressure of authority he is capable of killing? Is the goal justifying the means, and in what categories to determine the value of the potential benefits of the research results and the harm done to the subject and society as a whole?

 Ethical standards and codes, it would seem, limit the freedom of scientific research. So says a significant part of the scientific community. Scientists' awareness of their personal social and moral responsibility makes it necessary to make a choice that takes into account possible negative consequences (Salomons, & Scassellati, 2018, March). Science is a great power. And like any force, it can be dangerous. The ethics of science in the modern world fulfills the function of preserving this beautiful and dangerous force. Moral norms and ethical models are formed in society both in the form of ethical codes and by transferring to young researchers the worldview of teachers and academic leaders. In any human activity, including science, the actions and actions of each member of the community are subject to a developed system of ethical norms that determine the nature of sanctions depending on the behavior of its individual member. Such norms arise in the process of the development of science itself, similar to natural selection, preserving and introducing the new in the extent that it is necessary at this stage in the development of this science.

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The ethics of experiments on humans and animals

Some experiments are ethically ambiguous for another reason. It is a question of the voluntary consent and full knowledge of the future subject on the research procedure. There are experiments in which obtaining complete information about the essence of the experiment will entail not only a reduction in the quality of the results obtained, but also their complete distortion. For example, this concerns the use in the experiment of dummy persons, about which the subjects, acting according to a certain scenario, should not know. As another example, one can cite the situation when the study went beyond the control of the experimenter himself. Therefore, often in this kind of research, the subjects are given deliberately false information, revealing the truth about the true conditions of the experiment after it has been conducted.

Opponents of providing false information to future participants in the experiment speak of unethical lies and the impossibility of eliminating the damage caused by explanatory conversation at the end of the experiment. The points of contact of various ethical models today have been found as follows: the potential benefits from the results obtained in the study should significantly exceed the potential risk to the health and psychological well-being of the participants. In every experiment, there is a need to isolate variables and manipulate them. This constitutes a first methodological difficulty for the Social Sciences researcher. A feature of these sciences is the interaction of multiple variables in a situational context, which makes the isolation of variables very difficult. To this difficulty is added the possibility of manipulation of one of them, called independent variable and the measurement that causes its modification in another variable, called dependent. To the strictly methodological difficulties are added ethical precautions, which in the development of psychology as a science, were increased and specified. The human research is needed to develop new techniques in different areas of health component (Bonniaud, et.al. 2018). In psychology, the experiments produced on people are those that provide the necessary evidence to scientifically support any intervention technique. However, despite this need, the risk of instrumental zing the person -converting it in only one way to achieve scientific progress- means that all research must have clear procedures for control and ethical planning.

Scientific experiments are usually governed by a series of ethical principles that serve to ensure that the ambitions of those responsible for the study do not get out of control. Science is useful, but if human suffering is necessary to test a certain theory, it would be better to use our imagination until we come up with a better way to prove it. The cases that you will see later came into existence thanks to a series of scientists who thought: “well, a little suffering cannot be so bad” (Green, 2019). Some stayed to the limit and did not hurt their study subjects too much, but in other circumstances, several of these men of science crossed limits that should not be trespassed.

John B. Watson is responsible for conducting a classic, ethically questionable conditioning experiment on a nine-month-old baby. It consisted in relating a stimulus that used to be pleasant with another unpleasant, resulting in the fact that, when only the first one occurred, the child experienced fear, anger and displeasure. In 1939, Wendell Johnson devised a terrible study to see if positive or negative comments affected or caused speech disorders. For this, he chose twenty-two orphaned children and divided them into two groups. The former was praised for their fluent way of speaking and their excellent speaking skills. Those in the second were told that they suffered from severe stuttering, that they were not understood when they spoke and that the condition was incurable (Gravetter,et.al. 2018).

Many of the children without speech disorders in the second group suffered negative psychological effects. Some even became stutterers for life. Johnson's colleagues reprimanded them for using orphaned children to prove their theory. The University of Iowa officially apologized for this study in 2001. Many of those affected were given compensation, but the damage was already done.

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