

Research Article

Social Influence And Organizational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore and analyze the extensive literature review of the knowledge and tactics a leader can employ to benefit and maintain the sustainability of his/her organization and its people. This can transpire when a leader is knowledgeable and can apply social psychology concepts to influence and construct “more effective ways to create and sustain change” (Stober & Grant, 2006, p. 1) for the organization. Such leaders can empower their people, create a positive corporate culture, increase motivation, and at the same time improve their leadership strategy by focusing on the essential leadership issues. The data for this research were the comprehensive literature-based review and on the basis of those discussions, propositions were developed. The study offers a novel conceptual model that can be validated through empirical investigation. Moreover, the study offers several implications for social scientists, academic researchers, organizational leaders, and policy makers.

Keywords: Social Psychology, Conformity, Compliance, Group Norms, Transformational Leadership, Psychological Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Leaders exert influence between and within groups (Hogg, 2010). They hold significant power and frequently credited for influencing lives through social or organizational transformation, conflicts, downturns, rehabilitation, and technological (or such) revolutions, whether for good or bad. Leadership has a huge impact on people’s lives. However, historically, some individuals and groups face difficulty in emerging as leaders or being recognized as such, and hence have been less capable of exerting influence. Leaders are exert influence towards their followers and others, thus, leadership and influence are strongly connected, cognitively and phenomenologically. In social psychology, leadership and influence are two of the most important and well-studied themes.

Leadership is a field where substantial studies have been conducted for centuries; one central trait that all leaders must have is influencing and persuading others. Influential leaders enhance “their contribution to the realization of group goals” (Platow et al., 2017, p. 1). Organizational leadership can be studied through many social psychology concepts, like, social influence, group norms, conformity, mental schemas, groupthink, group behavior, obedience, reciprocity, social identity theory, liking, commitment and consistency, self-esteem, social cognition, social proof, authority, self-fulfilling prophecy, judgmental

heuristics, representative heuristics, analytic and holistic thinking style, controlled think, social perception, attribution theory, cultural bias and multiculturalism, organizational diversity, the self-awareness theory, understanding our emotions and the emotions of others around us within a corporate society. All of these theories are crucial social psychology parameters that a leader, in combination with his/her leadership style, should know and use to motivate, engage, and positively influence his/her peers towards a more efficient, sustainable, just, and productive organization.

Leadership has long been a fundamental and important topic of social psychology. This was the situation during the heyday of the small-group dynamics research tradition (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Shaw, 1981). However, many of social psychology's classic research programs have focused on leadership (Bales, 1950; Hollander, 1958; Lippitt & White, 1943; Sherif, 1966; Stogdill, 1974). With the emergence of the "great man or trait-based perspective," at the turn of the 20th century, the scientific research of leadership started. In the 1950s, leadership researchers started focusing on behavioral leadership styles. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Fiedler (1967, 1971), started the leadership "contingency theory movement." Shortly after the contingency movement gained popularity, another area of research focusing on the leaders-followers relationship (i.e., the relational school) gained attention and became the research focus. This movement was founded on a theory known as "vertical dyad linkage theory" (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), which later became known as "leader-member exchange (LMX) theory" (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). During last two decades of the current century, visionary/ transformational/neo-Charismatic/ authentic/ effective/ inclusive/ detection and destructive approaches become dominant leadership paradigms (Alifah & Sukmawati, 2021; Day & Antonakis, 2013; Fotso, 2021). This study focuses primarily on the dynamic effects of employee conformity and group norms and their engagement to corporate leadership. Since social psychology, at its core, is based on social influence and persuasion, this study aims to explore how these dynamics can influence can control, or even modify an organization and its professional groups.

Rationale of the Study

A conceptual study and extensive literature research would be most appropriate to discover how a leader can employ social psychology concepts to influence and persuade his/her people for effective organizational leadership. As primary organizational tools, persuasion and influence will be studied via the concepts of conformity, compliance, and group norms and behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influence and Leadership

Leaders are agents of influence; hence, an effective leader is one who can influence his/her people. Therefore, influence and leadership are strongly intertwined. So, what is leadership? According to Platow (2017), leadership is the course of influencing others in a way that develops their contribution to the achievement of group goals. Leadership cannot exist outside a group, so it can only endure within a group and not be independent of it. Hence, we can say with certainty that leadership cannot prevail in the absence of followers. "There can be no leader without followers" (p. 2). Humans are part of different social systems, i.e., their family system, their professional system, their social system, their school or academic system, etc. Thus, we are all interconnected and dependent on a broader societal system, which has many different influential effects. That's where social psychology comes in with social influence at the center of its core. So, what is social influence? There is vast literature available that have investigated the social influence and some key contributions are shown in table-1. According to Aronson et al. (2014), social psychologists say that social influence is broader than the attempts of one person trying to change the behavior of another person, "It includes our thoughts and feelings as well as our overt acts." (p. 4). For instance, humans can be

influenced by the presence of strangers with whom we have never interacted. Or humans can be influenced by "the imaginary approval or disapproval" (p. 4) of our parents, teachers, or other people who we anticipate how they will react to us. There are cases where various social influences clash with one other; for instance, when the social systems people interact with have conflicting values and norms from the ones being exposed to and the ones raised by their families and cultures (Aronson et al., 2014).

According to Hogg (2010) the most prevalent and withstanding modes of social influence are conformity and group norms. Group norms are often represented by individuals who engage in leadership positions within those groups; and conformity, which can be defined as "a change in a person's behavior or opinions as a result of real or imagined pressure from a person or group of people." (Aronson, 2012, p.19). As discussed, leadership cannot exist outside a group, how can a leader influence his/her group? A meta-analysis of Asch-like conformity study (Asch, 1956) was conducted by Bond and Smith (1996); it revealed considerably lower levels of influence when the influencing agents were perceived to be out-group members. Today, there are many, supplementary experimentations, which illustrate that the in-group agents are the ones who can effectively influence individuals':

- a) Understandings of the reality confronting them
- b) Actual overt behaviors
- c) Promotion of collective welfare

(Platow, 2017, p. 3)

Thus, in-group members are not only preferred as leaders and are perceived as trustworthy, but group members are willing to place their fates in their hands (Platow, 2017). Of course, leadership is not as simple as just being an in-group member; a critical factor that affects the corresponding degree of influence within a group is the relative in-group prototypicality of an individual, idea, or behavior conduct (Turner et al., 1987). In leadership, the more in-group prototypical a group member is, the more influential he/she is theorized to be (Turner, 1991).

Table 1: Relationship between Influence and leadership identified by previous studies

SR #	Study Area	Studies
1	Influence and Leadership	Cartwright, (1965); Singh-Sengupta, (1997); Pasa, (2000); Vecchio, (2007); Hogg, (2010); Ali et al. (2015); Ruben & Gigliotti, (2016); Mittal & Elias, (2016); Abson, (2021).

Source: Author/ Authors

In line with the initial description provided earlier, as to the essence of the leadership of the course of influencing others in a way that develops their contribution to the achievement of group goals (Platow,

2017), is psychologist’s Martin Chemers’s definition of leadership as "a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Crano, 2004, p. 2). Chemers highlights the importance that social influence has played in opening the study of leadership to the theories and empirical studies of social psychology, which has focused on the features that advance or impede the course of social influence (Crano, 2004).

P₁: There is a strong relationship between leadership and influence

Social Influence and Conformity

Social influence and conformity have been studied extensively in social psychology since 1936, when Muzafer Sherif, experimented with the autokinetic effect. Some influential studies are mentioned in table-2. The autokinetic effect or autokinesis is a phenomenon of visual perception in which a still, small point of light in a completely dark environment appears to move. The movement, though, is utterly illusory. William Hood, a student of Sherif, wanting to convey a logical explanation to this illusion, provided an example of social influence, which was not based on threats or interpersonal pressure. Thus, they conducted an experiment, which paired a participant with a confederate who had to estimate the distance of light movement over a sequence of trials. In the first phase of the experiment, the confederate made a series of estimations of the extent to which the light moved, while the participant passively observed. The confederate-based estimates were either consistently high or low in comparison to that of the control groups. Then, in the second phase of the experiment, the confederate was dismissed, and the participant was asked to make independent series of estimations of the extent to which the light moved. The results of the experiment indicated that the estimations of the participants who were paired with confederates who made high estimates were significantly higher than those of participants who were paired with confederates who made low estimations. Consequently, the participants were influenced by the Confederates and followed their lead even though the accomplices were not present at the time of judgment. Thus, they were influenced, and they conformed without being under threat or any pressure. It is notable to acknowledge famous leaders who similarly stimulated people to follow their vision and paradigms without the use of threat or scrutiny, some are, Martin Luther King Jr., Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa, John F. Kennedy, Steve Jobs, Wangari Muta Maathai, Jane Addams, Alexander the Great, etc. (Crano, 2004).

Table 2: Past studies on social influence and conformity

SR #	Study Area	Studies
1	Social influence and conformity	Moscovici & Faucheux, (1972); Friedkin & Johnsen, (1990); Cialdini & Trost, (1998); Avtgis, (1998); Cialdini & Goldstein, (2004); Bond, (2005); Rashotte, (2007); Li, Bhowmick, & Sun, (2011); Maness, & Cirillo, (2016); Xie et al. (2016).

Source: Author/ Authors

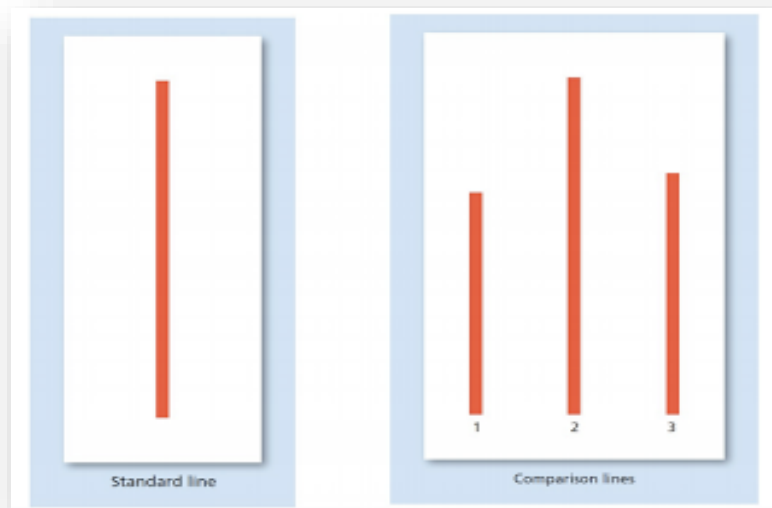


Figure 1: Asch's Judgment Line (Haverford College)

As successful leaders transcended their vision and orama via conformity without threat or pressure, in leadership though, it is often needed to apply compliance under pressure via an implied or real threat. A classic example comes from a 20th-century psychologist, Solomon Asch, who conducted an experiment where participants viewed two cards one with a standard line and the other one with three lines line, and asked to state out loud which of the three lines matched the standard line in the first card. As we can see in figure 1, it is evident that the second line is closest to the length of the line on the first card (Aronson et al., 2014). However, the participants were paired with three or more confederates who gave the wrong answers on six of the twelve judgments trials, 75 percent of the participants agreed with the erroneous judgment at least once, thus, “about one-third of all influence attempts were successful” (Crano, 2004, p. 2), even though the correct response was obvious, and the inaccurate judgments did not represent the participants’ true perceptions. In other words, the participants knew that they were giving the wrong answers. As it can be observe, Asch, set up an experiment to discover whether people would conform even when they evidently knew the right answer. Now we wonder, why did people conform at this rate even though the situation was not ambiguous at all? In post-experimental discussions, people admitted that they agreed with the confederates because they did not want to arouse anger or because of their fear of being “the lone dissenter” or appear like a fool or peculiar. “These are classic normative reasons for conforming: People know that what they are doing is wrong but go along anyway as not to feel peculiar or look foolish. Notably...normative pressures usually result in *public compliance without private acceptance*; people go along with the group even if they do not believe in what they are doing or think it is wrong” (Aronson et al., 2014, p. 248). Another famous research study, which demonstrated conformity to authority, was Stanley Milgram’s experiment, which came to become the most famous experiment in social psychology. Based on above discussion we proposed that:

P₂: Social influence can effectively operate through conformity

Compliance versus Conformity

Compliance under peer pressure is quite different from conformity as discussed in Hood and Sherif’s study. Asch’s experimental participants perceived enormous social pressure to follow the responses in alignment with those of their peers, even though they were in contrast with their own reality. This is a surprise since the participants were not under any real threat to be excluded by a group that was of any importance to them (Aronson et al., 2014).

In some aspects, Asch's experiment might not seem to resonate with true leadership; however, the influence process at work in his research did result in people following the embedded directions of others and agreeing with their apparent observations. Unfortunately, there are ample examples of people following leaders under threat even when they were not in agreement with their views, opinions, and beliefs. Some popular ones are Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Enver Hoxha, etc. these tyrannical leaders "commanded allegiance even from people who did not accept their goals or visions" (Crano, D., 2004, p. 3). Moreover, from the organizational realm, there are numerous times when an employee might conform to an opinion or decision of a superior manager even though he/she might not agree with that view. This can bring, in many cases, disastrous effects since the superior-manager might make the wrong decision and even though his subordinates might see it, they will keep it to themselves and not question him due to his position and level of authority.

Another potentially dangerous effect of blind obedience to authority figures is in the medical industry. Since health gain the importance, medical doctors are regarded as "respected authorities" (Cialdini 2009, p. 181), who possess great knowledge and thus influence in the medical arena. "No one may overrule a doctor's judgment in a case, except perhaps, another doctor of higher rank" (p. 181). Thus, a deep-rooted belief in "unthinking" obedience to doctors' instructions has been established among healthcare staff. (Cialdini, 2009). The worrying possibility that doctors also make mistakes and when they do, no one lower in the hierarchy will think or maybe even dare to question it – is a scary scenario, which endures because "once a legitimate authority has given an order, subordinates stop thinking in the situation and start reacting" (p.181). Now imagine this kind of conformity in a complex hospital environment; hence mistakes are bound to happen, often with casualties of the innocent patients' health and sometimes even their lives.

So, as this catastrophic organizational social influence phenomenon has been proven to vastly hurt corporations either in the healthcare industry or other industries, modern leaders are keen to adopt the transformational leadership style where employees are more autonomous and are motivated and encouraged to voice their opinions and views without the threat of being negatively critiqued.

Social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) defined public compliance "as the behavior involving acquiescence to the demands of an influence source without acceptance of the source's position" (Crano, W.D., 2004, p. 4). Thus, public compliance occurs due to the power and/or control an "influence source" has over another person and can govern whether or not the anticipated behavior is acquiesced. Hence, people are motivated to enact by the demands of the "influence source" due to the power to prize or punish the person or group. In other words, public compliance encompasses conveying their public behavior – not their beliefs – in accord with the influence source requests.

Table 3: Past Research on compliance vs. conformity social influence

SR #	Study Area	Studies
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1	Compliance vs. Conformity Social Influence	Klein, (1967); McCauley, (1989); Abrams & Hogg, (1990); Zimbardo & Leippe, (1991); Cialdini & Trost, (1998); Cialdini & Goldstein, (2004); Pratkanis, (2007); Cialdini & Griskevicius, (2010); Prislin & Crano, (2012); Guadagno, Muscanell, Rice, & Roberts, (2013); Gass & Seiter, (2018).
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Moreover, conformity, or “private acceptance” (Crano, 2004, p. 4), is the adoption and internalization of the influence source’s beliefs. In this case, the "conformee," accepts and conceptualizes the influence source's views as valid and worth accepting. Hence, the "conformee," will continue to follow the guidelines and principles of the conformer even in his/her absence. Thus, “unlike compliance, conformity behavior will persist even in the absence of surveillance by the influence source” (p. 4). consequently, leaders who can persuade people to see the validity of their opinion, are more likely to be followed even in their absence. This is in contrast with the leaders who use threat and their power to attain compliance, who can only be successful when they have adequate power to monitor and punish those who might oppose their views. But, if these leaders lose their power, they will be no longer able to control and affect the behavior of their followers. Leaders who are followed because people believe in them, in their beliefs, expertise, and knowledge, will be followed even if they cannot or don't monitor the commitment of their followers, just as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did, and many others.

P₃: Compliance and conformity are two different types of social influence

Transformational Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

As a corporate trainer, executive coach, and entrepreneur, I can say that I have observed that the same applies to corporate and organizational leadership when the employees are empowered and embodied into the vision, mission, and values of their company, even if their managers or leaders are not present, they will continue to perform the same or even better even in their leader’s absence. This transpires when a company transcends from a “traditional top-down, control-oriented management model and replaces it with a highly participative or high-performance approach” (Crano, 2004, p. 19). Companies with high involvement approaches create work environments where all employees are urged and empowered to think tactically about their jobs and take personal responsibility for the quality of their work, make independent decisions regarding various challenges that they may face and in general make their work more personally meaningful and not hesitate to be responsive to organizational needs. (Jha, 2014). This paradigm of organizational leadership is the adopted notion of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, which is the approach an employee demonstrates by behaving like an entrepreneur while working within a large organization. Engaging in employee intrapreneurial activities is beneficial for both organizations and each individual employee's personal growth and well-being. Additionally, the research results from a study conducted by Gawke et al., (2017), suggest that "employee intrapreneurship, personal resources, and work engagement are part of a resources gain cycle, which means intervening to increase either one of these constructs can be expected to yield increases in the others" (p. 98). This is especially interesting for organizations that rely heavily on the entrepreneurial activities of employees, as increasing resources and/or work engagement may yield promising changes in their employee's intrapreneurial behaviors and increase personal resources,

such as ego-resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, and thus foster employee intrapreneurship (Gawke et al., 2017). Numerous research scholars have investigated the relationship between leadership and the psychological empowerment of followers. Table-4 shows some key contributors in the study area.

Table 4: Key Past Studies on transformational leadership and psychological empowerment

SR #	Study Area	Studies
1	Transformational Leadership	Bass, (1985, 1990, 1997, & 2006); Bass, Avolio, & Goodheim, (1987); Diaz-Saenz, (2011); Anderson, (2017); Waruwu et al. (2020).
2	Transformational Leadership & Psychological empowerment	Özaralli, (2003); Avey et al. (2008); Allameh, Heydari, & Davoodi, (2012); Dust, Resick, & Mawritz, (2014); Choi et al. (2016); Schermuly, & Meyer, (2020).

The lack of the organization’s group members' “voice is an aversive psychological condition because it entails an acute sense of powerlessness, seclusion, and alienation" (Sani & Todmam, 2012, p. 1648). This is detected in studies conducted by researchers who have found that when people are involved in the decision-making process of an organizational project or plan, are more likely to be positive towards the outcomes and decisions of this project if their voice has been heard, shared, and of course, considered (Sani & Todmam, 2012).

Henceforth, the “traditional, autocratic, superior-subordinate model followed by management professionals has given way to a more democratic approach in which leadership, decision making, responsibility, and authority are shared. The concepts of this new approach fall within the realm of transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)” (Jha, 2014, p. 18). This approach gives the employees improved feelings of capability, resilience, and responsibility for their work. In transformation leadership, an organization deserts the “traditional top-down, control-oriented management model and replaces it with highly participative or high-performance approach” (p. 19). Such organizations create work environments in which employees are encouraged to think strategically about their jobs, undertake personal responsibility for the quality of their work, and voice their opinions freely. Sani & Todmam (2012) stated that,

Perceived lack of voice is an aversive psychological condition because it entails an acute sense of powerlessness, seclusion, and alienation. Consistent with that, researchers have found that people involved in decision-making processes show more positive reactions when they are allowed opportunities to voice their opinion than when they are denied such opportunities
(p. 1648)

Thus, the ability for employees to voice their opinion and be part of the decision-making process within an organizational environment eliminates or even evaporates the social influence as discussed above, which

can halt the progress and effectiveness of an organizational system, which of course incorporates its most important element, its human capital.

P4: Psychological empowerment enhances the transformational leadership influence

Group Norms and Organizational Leadership

"There can be no leader without followers" (Platow, 2017, p. 2). Thus, followers in the organizational realm are an organizational "group." What is a group? According to Aronson et al., (2014), "A group consists of three or more people who interact and are interdependent in the sense that their needs and goals cause them to influence each other" (p.283). Groups are comprised of people who interact for some common cause or purpose. Examples of groups could be personal, professional, educational, or social, etc., like our families, our campus groups, community groups, such as a church or synagogue, a sports team, classmates, professional groups, etc.

Groups may vary in composition and size. The larger the group, the more difficult it is to interact closely with all its members. Another important facet of a group is that its members tend to be similar in gender, age, beliefs, values, opinions, education, etc. This happens because groups tend to attract homogeneous personas before they even become a group. Also, people who share similar mindsets and stances are drawn to others akin to them. Thus, they are more likely to recruit and connect with group members who are comparable to them. Similarity encouragement within groups begins with the unofficial acceptance of group norms. Group norms or social norms are a "powerful determinant of our behavior" (Aronson et al., 2014, p. 285). Norms exist in all societies, and they determine which behaviors are acceptable or not. Some norms are more general like we are expected to be quiet in a library, and other norms can be more specific to a group, like in sports teams, families, fraternities, etc. Norms are powerful and govern the behavior of groups, we can see that when a member of a group deviates from a norm (Aronson et al., 2014). Norms may be explicit; thus, all members are aware of them, and new members are introduced to them, or they can be implicit, of where the senior members of the group should have the capability and motivation to accurately transmit the norm(s) to the new members. Norms are vital to the existence of all groups since without them there would be anomie, anarchy, and chaos, since there would be no explicit or implicit confines to convey proper behavior – "many companies would go bankrupt if the norm "do your job well" did not exist" (Parks, 2004, p. 2). Hence, norms, play a supervisory and often a "survival function" (p. 2) to organizations, and thus for these purposes alone, they are indeed influential and powerful.

Although group norms are vital and beneficial for the sustainability of the organizational group, there will always be group members who will deviate from the norms for their own benefit and thus create a schism within the group. Since such behavior can harm the group balance, cohesiveness, and in some cases even its existence, leaders have adopted sanctioning mechanisms to penalize deviant behavior. Examples are the laws and regulations societies create to maintain civilized, normalized behaviors, which if violated, have repercussions. There are also non-legal measures against non-normative behavior, like ostracism and social isolation, which are often successful in sanctioning deviant behaviors. However, for sanctioning systems to be effective, they must be consistently applied, or else deviants may risk employing their non-normative behavior since they might think they might not get penalized accordingly. Also, the sanction or penalty affected must have a repercussion that will be experienced as a "valuable loss" to the deviant consequently, one will think twice before he/she breaks the norm. (Parks, 2004).

Moreover, in an organizational setting, a group leader may be challenged when a particular organizational group is unwilling to follow the overall organization's norm. (Parks, 2004). For example,

there are cases where, in a large organizations conflict can arise between two organizational groups because one of the groups does not want to conform to the formal corporate norms, or wants to alter them. For instance, in a large hospital, a group of senior nursing staff whose members have been working more years in comparison to their newly employed nursing colleagues, who feel that they deserve to do less or even no, late-night shifts than the recently hired nurses, although there has been no formal statement or communication of that sort from the organization. Thus, this is in contrast with the company's norm of late-night shift scheduling and can bring severe confrontations among hospital staff.

Although social psychologists have explored the methodologies that can bring “oneness and uniformity” (Sani & Todmam, 2012, p. 1647) to social groups, most social groups are internally subdivided and, in some cases, they might undergo a schism to create a "breakaway group or join a different group" (p. 1647). In general, schisms are a regular phenomenon, and although they take place predominately in religion and politics, they do often occur in professional and organizational groups as well. Many new smaller companies are created by people who were once part of a larger organization and underwent a schism, thus were born from a "breakaway group." (p. 1647). Breakaway groups are often formed when group members think that the group identity or group norms have been destabilized and thus, the possibility of parting from the group increases. (Sani & Todmam, 2012). There is extensive research on group norms, social influence, and leadership behavior. Some key studies that have highlighted these relationships are shown in table-5.

Table 5: Previous Literature on Group Norms, Social Influence, and Organizational Leadership

SR #	Study Area	Studies
1	<p><u>Group Norms & Social Influence</u></p> <p>Deviance Schisms</p> <p>Norms Transcendence</p> <p>Changing & Substituting Norms</p> <p>Implications of Group Norms</p>	<p>Postmes, Spears, & Lea, (1999); Smith et al. (2007); White et al. (2009); Goldstein & Cialdini, (2011); Kura, Shamsudin, & Chauhan, (2013); McDonald & Crandall, (2015); Smith, (2020).</p> <p>de Moura et al. (2001); Biron, & Bamberger, (2012); Kim & Shin, (2015); Nickelsen,</p>
2	<p><u>Group Norms & Leadership</u></p>	

	(2017); Cook, Zill, & Meyer, (2020); Du et al. (2021).
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From the preceding analysis, we can detect that norms serve as an Informational source as they designate to its members what kind of behavior is or is not appropriate and/or acceptable by the group or organization (Aronson et al., 2014). Consequently, new members must be accurately informed and trained about the group norms. The process of norm transmission is typically referred to as “socialization” (Parks, 2004, p. 3). Official norms are documented and thus are easier to transmit; within organizations, proper onboarding and orientation programs are created and implemented to help new employees learn and comprehend the official organizational norms and clarify any ambiguities that might exist in the written record.

Informal norms are not recorded and rely on unwritten ‘rules’ and ‘values’ which are shared verbally or by observing the behaviors and conducts of the employees who have been employed in the organization longer. “Knowledge of the informal norms is typically confined to members of an ingroup and it can be very difficult for an out-group member to receive an acknowledgment that the norm exists” (Parks, 2004, p. 4). Thus, it is rather challenging when an out-group member desires to change the informal norms. This can occur when a new senior executive is hired to alter the organizational systems and, hence, experiences resistance- immunity to change. As discussed, norms are very influential between group members once established, and they are not easy to change, and this can be a significant hurdle for the leader of a group who might want or need to alter the group's norm(s) (Parks, 2004).

We can experience the endurance of norms within various cultural societies and organizations by observing the continuity of a norm even when generations change. There was a well-known study conducted by Jacobs and Donald Campbell in the early 1960s; where they ‘implanted’ incorrect or deviant data to an experiential group they created, their finding was that even when they replaced group members within the research group study with new members until all of the original members were gone, and then began replacing the second generation of members with a third-generation, and so on for many generations. “Jacobs and Campbell observed the original “false report” norm to be influential across many generations, though each succeeding generation altered it slightly, and eventually the norm matched that observed in a control group” (Parks, 2004, p .4). The central outcome of this study was that no generation created a new norm as its own; but adopted the norm inherited by the previous generation, occasionally in an altered form; even though the inherited norm was a deviant one. This demonstrates that norms are enduring and long-lasting. According to Sani & Todmam (2012) when group members think that a group norm profoundly alters a fundamental feature of the group identity, they “will tend to believe that the group identity as a whole has been subverted” (p. 1648).

Therefore, what can we do if we want or need to change a norm? Unquestionably a deviant norm has to be altered, as well as other non-deviant norms, which have to be replaced with new and updated ways of working. For instance, when companies resist following new and improved technologies, which can reduce the company’s costs and efficiency. There are examples of great companies, which failed to change their business practices and ended up in bankruptcy, for example, Kodak.

Consequently, an important question arises; how can leaders efficiently alter organizational group norms when needed if they are so firmly embedded in the corporate culture? (Parks, 2004). Going back to the Jacobs and Campbell study, the researchers propose the “rotation of group membership” (p. 4) process, via this mode, employees whose behavior is deep-rooted in the undesired norm are removed, and different employees who are instructed and coached in the altered norm are included in the group. Yet, this can be unfeasible at times, or even unreasonable in other cases since significant performance drawbacks can surface due to the removal and/or exchange of experienced employees for novice ones. Thus, another option is to isolate the employee who “most strongly enforces the norm and remove him/her” (p. 4). Other reasonable strategies are the demonstration and proof of the weakness of the deviant norm and providing motivations for acceptance of the new norm. Also, although I am personally not very fond of this, some may use punishing tactics to those who continue to follow the old norm and will not adhere to the new one. However, according to Parks (2004), none of these tactics are consistently effective. The most efficacious “intervention” for altering a norm seems to be the group's experiencing a failure as the result of adhering to the established norm” (p. 4) since a “failure” provides concrete indications that the norm is not effectual anymore. For example, in General Motors, though some employees had been trying for a decade to change its pattern of avoiding issues of fuel efficiency, it “was finally altered in the late 1970s after sales of General Motors' cars was surpassed by sales of fuel-efficient imports” (p.4-5). Nevertheless, although experiencing failure can indicate that a norm needs to change, but it doesn't designate the way the norm should be reformed. Thus, groups that want change might have to outsource its ‘solutions' by seeking consultation from an outside expert, who will help them in devising a new and efficient norm. Finally, the ability for a norm to be flexible “reduces the likelihood that subgroups will adopt their own standards of behavior” (p. 5). Hence, if the fundamental norm becomes less appropriate, “its flexibility will allow it to be altered more easily” (p. 5), consequently facilitating the group to prevent abrupt transitions and transformations that can arise if a dominant norm has to be discarded and substituted by an entirely new one (Parks, 2004).

Cycling back to the initial analysis of group norms, it was noted that norms are fundamental to the existence of all groups since without them there would be anomie, anarchy, and chaos, and there would be no explicit or implicit confines to convey proper behavior. Subsequently, “no group can easily exist without a set of norms” (Parks, 2004, p. 5). However, group leaders must be knowledgeable that “the norms within a smaller group do not have to correspond to the norms of the larger group within which it is embedded. Humbly assuming that members of the smaller group will act in a particular way because the larger group subscribes to that behavior is dangerous” (p. 5). Also, leaders must know that the effectiveness of group norms can change at any time; what has worked in a past case may no longer work presently. Therefore, being a leader of a successful and productive group necessitates the examination of the prevailing group norms, and interfering when the norm(s) is preventing the progress and development of the organization as a unified organizational system.

P₅: There is a significant relationship between group norms, social influence, and organizational leadership

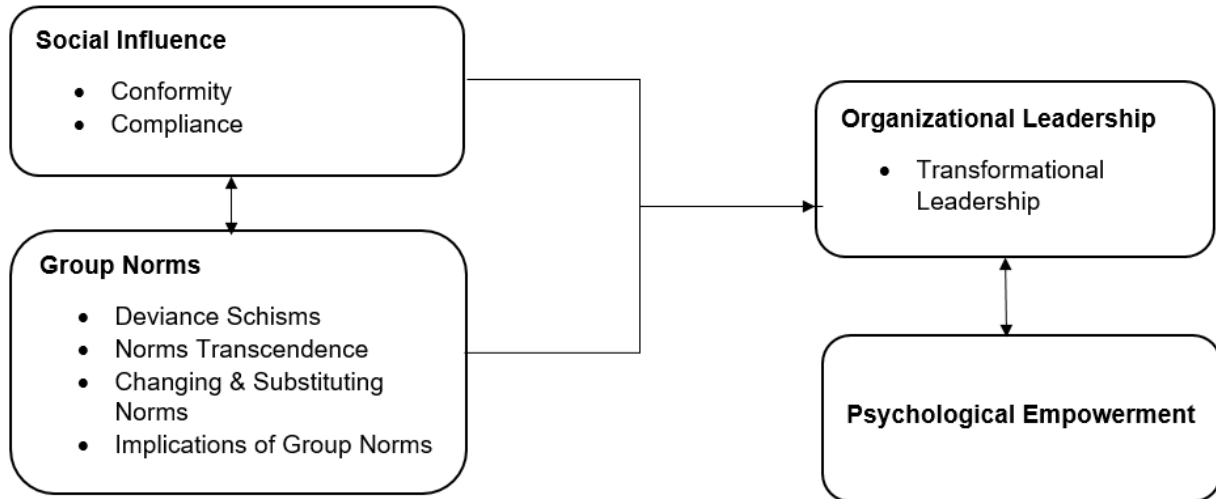


Figure-2: Proposed Model for Social Influence, Group Norms, Organizational Leadership and Psychological Empowerment

CONCLUSION

Social psychologists want humans to see the truth about their interdependency to all social systems, like their families, jobs, hobbies, etc. All people are equally entangled into these social systems, but still often see themselves as independent agents. Social psychology aims to help people around the world comprehend that they are part of a "social organism, as much as a cell is part of a body" (Aron, & Aron, 1989, p. 22). Social psychology leads humanity towards "an expanded awareness that will prove essential to our survival" (p. 161). And as Ellen Berscheid, a renowned researcher and leader of the "Society for Personality and Social psychology, said, "Social influence is one of the great, great influences in nature...tremendously powerful...yet you can't see it" (p. 24).

IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights the broad area of social influence and organizational leadership. It revealed how social influence is related to organizational leadership, especially the transformational leadership. Hence, it has offered several theoretical and practical implications. Moreover, this research contributes in extending the literature on social influence, group norms, transformational leadership and it enhance psychological empowerment. Many past studies have investigated the social influence, group norms, transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. However, still there is no study that has offered the comprehensive conceptual model for social influence and leadership. Therefore, this study offers a detailed model which includes combine investigation of social influence, group norms, transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. Moreover, this study provides basis for empirical investigation of understudy variables, by providing comprehensive literature base. Furthermore, this study offers guidelines for the future researchers especially in the leadership domain.

LIMITATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study has several limitations that offer opportunities for future researchers. Additional research is suggested to examine the other side of the coin, meaning, the influence that employees or "followers" have over leaders and leader behavior since followers are not regarded as merely passive recipients of leader

influence but active participants who are part of the social system in which they are governed (Oc & Bashshur, 2013). The proposed conceptual model is not empirically tested, so it is an opportunity for the future research to test it empirically through primary data collection.

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