

Individual personal characteristics and his



tendency to conformity

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Abstract

The article is devoted to conformism of an individual as a result of social influence. Social and economic factors, influencing on formation of individual's tendency to conformism are presented. Personal – psychological peculiarities, promoting the exertion of conformal behavior, are analyzed.

Key words: conformism, conformal behavior, social-psychological influence, personal characteristics, tendency to conformality.

Social-psychological influence and conformal behavior of an individual.

Conformism in social psychology is determined as a kind of social influence, the result of which is considered to be striving to correspond to opinion of majority. Conformism is considered to be conditioned by social influence from the one hand and personal influence from the other hand. Social influence is conditioned by feeling of belonging to a group or society and also the necessity in approval of others. Personal influence reveals itself in case of lack of confidence and the wish of a person to act correctly.

Social conformity is understood as liability of individuals, groups of people to the influence of social, national traditions, forms of behavior, revealing in adoption of social and national regulations, stereotypes without internal resistance and enough reasoning.

On the unconscious, emotional level, social and ethnic conformity reveals itself in forms of such processes as particular suggestibility, capacity and necessity to imitate bearers of social or national traditions, different cultures and communities [7].

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As some researches show, persuasion of influence may be intensified with the help of some external factors.

So, Robert B. Cialdini defines variety of causes on the background of which an individual shows extra-conformity: uncertainty of the situation, high authority status in society (from here there is a tendency to obey); trust in society to the majority opinion; and other [13].

Hadley Cantril mentions the activity in the country and world as the reasons, from which depends the development of personal characteristics. In the case of bad financial condition of the country, contradictions to economical and political program, danger of expansion from the side of other countries, long-term unemployment, impossibility to influence or change the developments – these factors cause emotional unsteadiness and on the back of it – tendency to conformity.

Besides, the significant role in taking decisions plays authoritativeness factor of mass media in society, public authority, existing standards of thinking in society, which determine conceptional construct of an individual.

The additional factors may be also individual's economic condition, there is more intensified

tendency to conformity at low economic level. Whatever economic status is, the important factor here is education, the higher it is, the less individual is inclined to conformity. Age peculiarities also have some impact – the older an individual, the greater the tendency to conformity [1].

Researches show, that individual's personal characteristics reveal themselves in the context of certain external impacts, tendency of an individual to conformity is closely connected with an influence of external social environment. David Myers marks that "suggestions cannot determine behavior if external impact is stronger than internal conviction" [9, p.187]. In favor of this statement speaks Granovskaya R.M. "In Zimbardo experiments persons under test ...acted cruelly not because of personal peculiarities, but in accordance with his role and situation." [7, p.524].

In such a way, the persuasion of social-psychological influence on the individual may be intensified with the help of different external factors, on which the reveal of personal characteristics depends considerably.

Personal characteristics of an individual allowing to increase the degree of persuasion of social-psychological influence.

Except social-psychological influence, on the tendency of an individual to conformity have an influence such factors as age, sex, profession.

It is known, for example, that in growing-up years, adolescent, tendency to conformity the highest, then reduces and after 25 years stays on its individual level.

Women's conformity is considered to be higher than men's one but if the discussed problem refers to mainly women's type of activity, women do not defer and men are more conforming.

As the researches mark, the more individual's profession is connected with collective activity, the greater tendency to conformity. For example, high level of conformity is observed among orchestra participants (70%), among military it is higher than among engineers.

Besides, some other peculiarities of individual may be distinguished, which allow to increase the degree of persuasion of social-psychological influence on an individual, in consequence of this factor, tendency to conformity increases. To such psychological peculiarities one may refer anxiety, low self-evaluation, feeble-mindedness.

Anxiety. Recent researches concerning anxiety are directed to differentiation of situational anxiety, connected with concrete external situation, and personal anxiety, which is a stable quality of a person [8, p.395].

In psychology anxiety is observed as personal quality, which may condition individual's tendency to conformity in the context of social-psychological influence.

In situations, connected with social interaction some individuals are tended to have anxious feeling. Ch. Spilbergs's researchers revealed, that "individuals, characterized by high degree of anxiety, are more prone to feel extra-anxiety in situations, which have a threat for their self-estimation, especially in situations of interpersonal relations, where their personal adequacy is estimated." [5, p.100].

Researches Hodges and Felling, Spilberger have discovered correlation between presence in individual of personal anxiety and intensiveness of its development in socially important stress situations (for example, during public speech or test performance). Researches consider that "the factor of threat mediates such type of interrelation – "I" or "self-evaluation threat" [5, p.101].

Prikhozhan A.M., during study of anxiety forms, distinguishes aggressive-anxious type and anxiety-dependant type. The typical feature of aggressive-anxious type is "strongly marked sense of threat, peculiar mix of aggression and anxiety: committing an aggressive action, an individual is seeming to apologize, being afraid of his "bravery".

Anxiety-dependant type demonstrates various forms of dependences: from excessive obedience (or predominant disobedience) to extra carefulness, attention to people. Such dependence individuals may realize, feel it as a burden, but cannot get rid of it. In Prikhozhan opinion, "appearingly, dependence is closely connected with anxiety, because in this case the feeling of helplessness, impossibility to cope with a situation, bleakness causes the need of help, support of others, dependence on these people."

The main feature of anxious type, according to Leongard's description, is "anxiety about presumable failures, anxiety about your own fate and fate of relatives. Herein there are no objective matters or they are negligible for such anxiety. They are notable for shyness and

sometimes for obedience. Constant vigilance towards external circumstances is compound with diffidence in own abilities.”

It is obvious, that such personal feature as anxiety may reduce effective activity of an individual in society. And the degree of persuasion of social-psychological influence for such individual will be rather high and this fact may condition the tendency to conformity.

Low self-evaluation. Anxiety as personal feature may develop in the person with low self-evaluation. Self-evaluation – person’s estimation of his own, his abilities, qualities and place among other people. Person’s mutual relations with other people, his criticism, self-exactingness depends on self-evaluation; self-evaluation influences the person’s activity.

It is known, that stable, too low self-evaluation involves overdependence on other people, dependence and even ingratiating manner, shyness, restraint and even disturbed percipience of others.

R.M. Granovskaya points at the connection between anxiety and self-evaluation: “Low self-estimation appears in permanent anxiety, fear of negative opinion heightened vulnerability”. Such individuals “react more vehemently to the criticism, laughing, blames and as a result of it, more dependant... They are passive, hypnotizable and shy” [6, p.506].

F. Zimbardo has fixed correlation between shyness and low self-estimation in his research: “Such people are too sensitive to criticism, supposing it speaks for their inferiority” [11, p. 282]. It is marked, that too sensitive to criticism individuals tend to find “confirmation” of their inferiority. This gradually forms low self-estimation.

The conditions for self-estimation formation are known - this happens during individual’s activity and interpersonal interactions. A.A. Rean marks: “Society influences greatly the formation of individual’s self-estimation”. Therefore, individuals with low self-estimation are subjected to social-psychological influence more than others. There is a high degree of possibility that low self-estimation may condition the tendency of individual to conformity.

Insufficient expressiveness of individual’s volitional powers. According to Maklakov’s opinion, the quality of self-control depends greatly on person’s self-evaluation. Low self-evaluation, as it was marked above, leads an individual to the loss of self-belief. Diffidence, feeling of inferiority may lead to gradual die of

individual’s aiming at end of his purpose and desired will never be realized. In case of individual’s steady demonstration of such manifestations, one may speak about insufficient expressiveness of volitional powers.

According to Smirnova and Il’ina’s opinion, volitional powers are “peculiarities of voluntary regulation, revealing themselves in concrete specific conditions, stipulated by the nature of overcoming difficulty” [7, p. 116]. E.P. Il’in considers that volitional powers may be regarded as “phenotypical characteristic of person’s abilities, as a composition of inherited and acquired” [7, p.117].

E.P. Il’in distinguishes the ability conditioned by inherited disposition (particularly, typological peculiarities of nervous system properties) as inherited component. And as acquired while ontogeny component – experience of a person: his abilities and skills, which are connected with self-stimulation; formed voluntary mindset not to yield towards the difficulties, which becomes customary while overcoming difficulties.

Researches distinguish complex moral-volitional powers, such as independence, initiative and vitality, insufficient formedness of which may condition weak voluntary regulation of individual’s activity.

Some authors, for example, K.N. Kornilov, studying individual’s exertion of feeble-mindedness, characterize suggestibility as lack of volitional power: “a person cannot critically take advises or suggestions what to do” [7, p.99].

Therefore, one may suppose that certain typological peculiarities of nervous system properties, insufficient formedness of volitional powers linked with low self-evaluation of individual may increase his dependence on socio-psychological influence and strengthen the tendency to conformality.

Tendency to conformality in connection with professional immaturity. Tendency to conformality in conditions of choice of professionally significant information may be conditioned also by professional immaturity of the entrant.

Professional immaturity, on our opinion may be characterized, on the one hand, by non formedness of professional concepts, and on the other hand, by absence of or insufficient expressiveness of professionally significant personal qualities of the entrant.

It should be marked that insufficiently precise, approximative professional knowledge and skills

creates the base for uncertain, nonformed professional position. One may suppose that entrant with nonformed professional presentations in conditions of choice of professionally significant information will show the tendency to conformality.

In such a way, to the factors conditioning the tendency to conformality in conditions of socio-psychological influence, one may regard the influence of external environment, such psychological peculiarities of individual as anxiety, low self-evaluation, insufficient expressiveness of volitional powers and also the presence of immature position.

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