



Understanding the Motivations Behind Breaking Social Norms

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Abstract: This study is targeting predictors of why people violate social norms, i.e., psychological needs, social expectations, and sensation-seeking. Participants were 30 participants between 18-23 years who were volunteers from Mohali and rated on standard psychological scales such as the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale and Sensation-Seeking Scale. The results revealed strong correlations among competence, autonomy, relatedness, and other sensation-seeking characteristics and emphasized the salience of psychological needs and social interaction in norm-breaking behavior. The results enhance the explanation of how and why one is violating society's norms and how individual characteristics are involved in doing so. The study charts the intricate dynamics of social demand and intrinsic motivation and provides orientations to future research and interventions towards the realization of social cohesion.

Keywords: *Social Norms, Norm Violation, Sensation-Seeking, Societal Expectations, Psychological Needs*

1. Introduction

Social norms play an extremely significant role in shaping human behavior by creating expectations within societies and communities. Norms are not legislated laws that dictate all matters from dressing to speaking. While norms bring social order and unity, they are not ubiquitous. Humans will break such expectations secretly, i.e., flouting dress codes, or openly, i.e., demonstrating, marching, or civil disobedience. There are a number of reasons why humans break

social expectations, from psychological, social, to environmental. This research will attempt to determine why humans break such expectations and why the actors break them.

2. Review of Literature

Social norms

Social norms are the perceived informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions. within a given group or community, thus guiding human behaviour.

The informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies, have been extensively studied in the social sciences.

According to Glynn, Huge, and Lunney (2009), perceived social norms significantly influence college students' intention to vote. The study found that both descriptive norms (perceived voting frequency) and injunctive norms (perceived importance of voting) predict voting intention. Additionally, similarity to peers moderated this relationship, and providing information on student voting rates strengthened injunctive norm consensus. The findings suggest that leveraging social connections can enhance voter mobilization efforts.

According to Kypri and Langley (2015), a study was conducted on 1,564 university students in New Zealand to examine the relationship between perceived drinking norms and actual drinking behavior. The findings revealed that most students overestimated the prevalence of heavy drinking and vomiting among their peers. Moreover, the extent of overestimation was significantly related to the individual's own drinking frequency. Only a small percentage of drinkers believed they consumed more alcohol than their peers. The study highlighted that perceived norms strongly influenced individual drinking levels, with closer social groups having a greater impact. However, it remains unclear whether these misperceptions cause or result from heavy drinking.

Norm violation

Norm violations as any behavior that infringes on a norm, whether informal or formal. The act of breaching social norms, leading to self-domestication and the establishment of new social norms through the control of coercive behavior by alpha alliances.

According to Frisby and Sidelinger (2013), a study was conducted on 211 college students to examine perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate student disclosures in the classroom. The findings revealed that disclosures were deemed inappropriate when they were frequent, negative, irrelevant to course materials, or violated classroom norms. Students who engaged in such

disclosures were rated lower in likeability and perceived as less academically competent by their peers.

According to Masters, Hixson, and Hayes (2020), a study was conducted on 107 middle school students to examine the perceived social costs of interacting with gender-atypical peers. The findings revealed that adolescents perceived higher social costs for male peers who violated appearance-based gender norms compared to female peers. The study highlighted the influence of gender identity, egalitarian attitudes, and social support in shaping adolescents' perceptions of gender norm violations.

Societal expectations

Societal expectations encompass the collective beliefs, norms, and standards that society holds regarding ethical behavior, responsibility, and conduct from individuals and organizations.

The beliefs and norms that a society holds about how individuals should behave in various roles, including gender roles and responsibilities.

According to Korstange, Brinthaup and Martin (2020), a study was conducted on 332 incoming college students to examine their beliefs about intelligence, social skills, work habits, and effort. The findings revealed significant differences in mindset based on ethnicity, gender, and ACT scores, but not first-generational status. The study suggests that student support programs should consider these variations in mindset to better support first-year student success.

According to Braxton, Vesper and Hossler (1995), a study was conducted on 263 first-time freshmen to examine the role of expectations in college persistence. The findings revealed that meeting expectations for academic and career development positively influenced both academic and social integration. Additionally, social integration was strengthened by expectations for personal involvement but weakened by expectations for a collegiate atmosphere. The study highlights the importance of aligning student expectations with college experiences to enhance retention and commitment.

Psychological Needs

Psychological needs is a psychological condition in which something is required or wanted. Emotional, social, structural and cultural variables that are essential for growth and development into an autonomous and adequately functioning human adult.

According to Goldman, Goodboy and Weber (2016), a study was conducted on 1,067 students to examine intrinsic motivation using self-determination theory. The findings revealed

that students' intrinsic motivation to learn was influenced by the fulfillment of psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study developed and validated two new measures of student motivation and highlighted the role of personalized education practices in enhancing intrinsic motivation.

According to Goldman and Brann (2016), a study was conducted on 119 undergraduate students to examine how instructors fulfill students' psychological needs through communication. The findings revealed that various instructor communication behaviors support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which, according to self-determination theory, intrinsically motivate students to learn. The study highlights the role of effective teaching practices in fostering both short-term and long-term student success.

Sensation-seeking

Sensation seeking is a personality trait that describes someone's desire for intense, novel, and complex experiences.

The tendency to search out and engage in thrilling activities as a method of increasing stimulation and arousal.

According to Velezmoro, Lacefield and Roberti (2010), a study was conducted on 140 college students to examine the relationship between sensation seeking, perceived stress, and Internet abuse. The findings revealed that disinhibition and total perceived stress predicted Internet abuse for sexual purposes, while perceived helplessness and boredom susceptibility predicted Internet abuse for non-sexual purposes. The study highlights the role of psychological factors in students' problematic Internet use.

According to Worthy, Jonkman, and Blinn-Pike (2010), a study was conducted on 450 college students from two Mississippi universities to examine the relationship between financial behaviors and various individual and socio-demographic factors. The findings revealed that financial behaviors were influenced by age, gender, public assistance, sensation-seeking, and the potential for problem gambling. The study highlights the financial instability of emerging adults, and the risks associated with problematic financial behaviors among college students.

3. Purpose

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the motivations that drive individuals to break social norms.

4. Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that individuals break social norms primarily due to peer influence and perceived injustice. It is expected that those who feel oppressed or influenced by group dynamics are more likely to engage in norm-breaking behavior.

5. Method

5.1 Sample

A total sample of 60 participants was collected from the University, aged between 18-23 years, from Mohali to investigate the gender-based differences in anime interest.

5.2 Measure

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale: It was developed by Deci and Ryan (2000) to assess the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The scale consists of 21 items, with responses rated on a scale from 1(Not at all true) to 7 (Very true). It is commonly used to measure well-being and motivation in various life domains, including education and work.

Sensation-Seeking Scale: It was developed by Zuckerman (1979) to measure an individual's tendency to seek novel and intense experiences. The scale consists of 40 items divided into four subscales: thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility. Respondents answer in a forced-choice format, selecting the option that best describes their preference.

5.3 Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and the questionnaires were asked to fill through google form each participant was thanked for their cooperation, standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

6. Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: *N, Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness	Thrill and Adventure seeking	Experience seeking	Disinhibition	Boredom susceptibility	Total
N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30

Mean	30.8	25.8	36.0	6.40	4.57	4.03	3.23	17.9
Standard deviation	4.59	6.03	8.60	2.36	2.25	2.28	1.43	4.89

Table 2: Correlation

	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness	Thrill and adventure seeking	Experience seeking	Disinhibition	Boredom susceptibility	Total
Autonomy	—							
Competence	0.616***	—						
Relatedness	0.409*	0.385*	—					
Thrill and adventure seeking	0.415*	0.182	0.401*	—				
Experience seeking	0.160	-0.003	0.041	0.092	—			
Disinhibition	-0.115	-0.213	0.236	0.062	0.264	—		
Boredom susceptibility	-0.225	-0.037	-0.258	-0.335	-0.021	0.283	—	
Total	0.165	-0.068	0.129	0.439*	0.667***	0.646***	0.263	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

7. Discussion of Results

The results indicated that Autonomy was positively correlated with competence ($r = .616$, $p < .001$) strongly, in that the higher level of personal control participants perceived, the higher they rated themselves as competent, as suggested by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Thrill and Adventure Seeking and Relatedness were positively related at a moderate level ($r = .401$, $p < .05$), suggesting that individuals who were concerned with social bonding were likely to participate in thrilling and adventurous pursuits. This aligns with the theory that social bonding can cause doing something new.

Experience Seeking was also highly correlated with Total Score ($r = .667$, $p < .001$), indicating high experience seekers participated in more activities in general. Disinhibition was also associated with Total Score ($r = .646$, $p < .001$), meaning high impulsive people participated in more

activities in general. This is also in accordance with previous studies that impulsivity can be the cause of high activity (Steinberg, 2007).

Negative correlation between Thrill Seeking and Boredom Susceptibility ($r = -0.335$, $p < .05$) was found, as had been hypothesized from previous theory: thrill seeking will alleviate boredom. The result supports that of Newberry & Duncan (2001) in the requirement that boredom can be alleviated by behaviors of novelty seeking.

The findings overall highlight the impact of psychological needs (Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness) on total involvement. Sensation-seeking traits (Experience Seeking, Disinhibition, Thrill Seeking) are also an excellent impact on involvement, and personal traits and impulsiveness are found to be significant impacts on involvement.

8. Conclusion

The present study assessed the social and psychological predictors of social norm disobedience. High scores in relatedness, autonomy, and competence were found to be more likely to be disobedient to social norms, especially when motivated by thrill-seeking and experience-seeking intentions. Impulsivity and social bonding also coerced individuals quite strongly to be in a behavior opposite of society's expectations. This research verifies previous research that prioritizes psychological needs and interpersonal relationships in shaping human behavior. There is additional research to be conducted investigating the long-term effects of norm-breaking behavior and piloting interventions that promote healthy norm-breaking behavior to produce positive social change.

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