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THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LEVELS OF EMPATHY AND PERSONALITY CONFORMITY

Abstract: this article examines the relationship between empathy and conformity, characterizing empathy and its properties, the concept of conformity in psychology, and the research on the interconnection between empathy and conformity.

Keywords: Empathy, conformity, psychology, research, interconnection.

There are several different viewpoints on the definition of the term "empathy." The Dictionary of Modern Terms in the Russian Language provides the following formulation: empathy is the ability to enter into another person's emotional state, to empathize with them, and to intellectually identify one's feelings with the feelings and thoughts of others. It plays an important role in our social lives, allowing us to interact effectively with others.

Typically, questions about the concept of "empathy" are the subject of research in ethics and aesthetics. E. Titchener used the word "empathy" to translate "Einfühlung" (from German) – meaning "feeling into something." In aesthetics, empathy is the process of understanding the nature of art and its impact, as well as the reason behind the observer's experiences and their tendency to compare themselves with the object.

In 1934, J. Mead defined empathy as the ability of one person to take on the role of another. A.A. Bodalev discusses the multifaceted nature and complexity of the phenomenon of empathy, which is expressed in the presence of both cognitive and emotional processes that constitute a unified system of empathy. S.L. Rubinstein believes that empathy is a part of human love for other people. D.B. Elkonin suggests that the capacity for emotional response to the experiences of others is a prerequisite for the development of social decentration. Therefore, D.B. Elkonin emphasizes the significance of empathy in the process of overcoming cognitive egocentrism in children. When examining empathy, a constitutional approach is employed, according to which this complex and multi-level construct is structured based on the indicators or sets of microprocesses that it encompasses. O.P. Sannikov claims that the personality traits that include empathy are viewed through a continuous-hierarchical structure. The scholar proposed the notion that the continuity of the parts defines the integrity of the personality. This implies that personality traits that are typically associated only with one level (dynamic traits with temperament; substantive ones with characterology; imperative traits with culture) are not discrete [1]. Most researchers identify at least three primary components within the structure of empathy:

- Knowledge of what another person feels;
- The experience of what they feel;
- A corresponding reaction to their feelings.

Different researchers present varying perspectives on the relationship between the affective and cognitive components within the structure of empathy and how they interact with one another. The socio-psychological model of empathy proposed by Mark Davis is widely recognized, where empathy is seen as a multifaceted system of reactions from one person to the condition or actions of another. The development and penetration of various levels explain the interconnection and "sprouting" of individual psychological traits, including empathy, from higher to lower levels. Thus,



each quality and trait of personality permeates its entire structure. The approach that considers empathy as an emotional penetration into the state of another person has conditioned initial research through its relationship with the emotional concept. This understanding of empathy was dominant in foreign psychology until the 1940s and in domestic literature during the initial period. Researchers such as T.P. Gavrilova, A.A. Megrebyan, R.S. Lazarus, B.N. Lazarus, T.N. Pashukova, L.P. Strelkova, N. Epstein, N.M. Yusupov, and others examine empathy within the framework of the emotional concept.

Conformity represents the adaptation of an individual's behavior and views in accordance with the opinions of those around them. Although the terms "conformity" and "conformism" are often used synonymously, the latter implies submission and carries a negative connotation, while conformity in sociology refers to an individual's position in relation to the group, expressing agreement or a rejection of the norms commonly held within that group, as well as the level of dependence on social influence. Conformism involves the acceptance of a specific opinion imposed by others or the group, often under pressure. According to S. Ash, conformism is characterized by an individual's abandonment of their personal beliefs in order to adapt more effectively to the group. Conformist behavior demonstrates the extent to which an individual submits to group influence and adopts certain standards, behavioral stereotypes, norms, and values of the group. The type of behavior that is true conformity involves a person accepting the opinions and norms of the group only on an external level, while internally having disagreements with the group but not expressing them aloud. The type of individual who fully accepts the majority's opinion and agrees with it indicates a high degree of suggestibility in that person.

In the study conducted by T.N. Sukhorukova, the hypothesis regarding the influence of empathy levels on behavioral strategies was proven. A low level of empathy can lead to the choice of destructive conflict behavior strategies, such as aggression, manipulation, avoidance, or evasion of the problem. This is because low empathy indicates an inability to understand or share the emotions and experiences of others, which results in a failure to consider the needs and interests of others. As a consequence, individuals with low empathy may prioritize their own interests and conflict resolution strategies while ignoring the needs and perspectives of other people. Conversely, a high level of empathic ability promotes the selection of constructive conflict behavior strategies, such as cooperation and compromise. People with high empathy are capable of taking on someone else's perspective and imagining what they feel, which helps them understand the needs and interests of others. This enables them to seek mutually acceptable solutions that consider the interests of both parties and to work collaboratively with others towards a constructive and satisfactory resolution of the conflict.

The aim of this article – is to determine the relationship between empathy and conformity. The study involved 30 students aged between 18 and 22 years, of both genders, residing in the Belgorod region. The diagnostic tools consisted of two methodologies: "Diagnostics of Empathy Level" (by I.M. Yusupov) and the "Conformity and Suggestibility Questionnaire" (by S.V. Klauchek and V.V. Delaryu). The first methodology is successfully used by Kazan psychologist I.M. Yusupov for researching empathy (compassion), which is the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes, demonstrating voluntary emotional responsiveness to the experiences of others. The second methodology is designed to study individuals with heightened suggestibility. The first methodology revealed that the overwhelming majority of participants have a normal level of empathy—76%, while 20% of respondents showed a low level of empathy, and 4% demonstrated a high level. The second methodology showed that most respondents of both genders within the studied age category possess moderate conformity. High conformity was found in only one respondent—a male aged 18. Among the respondents, the vast majority exhibited an average level of conformity—80%, with 17% showing low conformity and 3% exhibiting high conformity.



The mathematical analysis using Pearson's correlation demonstrated a tendency for correlation between conformity and empathy. The empathy coefficient was found to be 1, while the conformity coefficient was 0.024. The two-tailed value between the coefficients was 1 and 0.899. There is a moderate positive relationship observed between them. The analysis of the empirical data we obtained allows us to conclude that a normal or high level of empathy is a necessary condition for an individual to exhibit conformity. Using the methodologies for assessing empathy developed by I.M. Yusupov and the "Conformity and Suggestibility Questionnaire" by S.V. Klauchek and V.V. Delaryu, it was established that the majority of respondents exhibited a normal level of empathy and moderate conformity. Moreover, a connection was identified between the level of empathy and subsequent conformity: respondents with low levels of empathy displayed weak conformity. Therefore, individuals with a normal or high level of empathy tend to also have higher levels of conformity.

In conclusion, it can be stated that in this study, through the application of general scientific and specific scientific methods, we successfully achieved the goal of determining the relationship between empathy and conformity.

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