

A warm welcome students. This module is for the second-year students of psychology of semester four. The course code is PSC 104 and the course title is social psychology two. This module is a part of the second chapter that is social influence and the name of this module is destructive obedience. I am Sibyl Fernandes, assistant professor at Carmel College of Arts, Science and Commerce for Women, Nuvem, Goa.

The outline of the lecture is as follows. Under destructive obedience, we're going to look at why does it occur? Why does destructive obedience occur? We also going to look at how can obedience be resisted. By the end of this module you will be able to describe why destructive obedience occurs. You will also be able to understand how obedience can be resisted.

There are four key points so as to how destructive obedience occurs. The first one is people in authority assume responsibility. People in authority often have visible signs of their status and power. The third being commands are gradual in nature and do not start with orders to perform extreme actions. The last being, events move at a very fast pace, giving the people involved very little chance to consider their opinions.

Now let us look at each of these points in a little bit of detail. So, the first point which speaks about how people in authority relieve those who obey of the responsibility for their own actions. What happens here is many people say this very famous line which says I was only carrying out orders, which means they are not responsible for what they're doing. They very simply lay the blame on someone else. Now this transfer of responsibility maybe very implicit. The person in charge is assumed to have the responsibility of what happens, like in the case of the previous experiment that we looked at in the last module, which was designed by Stanley Milgram. In this particular experiment, the teacher was simply given instructions to harm the person who was learning if this person made any errors. So, the teacher did not hold any responsibility. The person who was giving the teacher instructions that person had responsibility if anything went wrong with the learner.

Now the next being people in authority often possess visible badges or signs of their status. They wear special uniforms and they have special titles. There's a very special norm which says obey the people in charge. We do fall prey to this because when people are confronted with this special norm, we see that most people do find it difficult to disobey. And therefore, we give in to this pressure and we do this, we obey the commands of people who are in charge, not wanting to do the right thing. Which means, after all we know we do not really want to do the wrong thing. Therefore, we give in to the pressures of someone else and this helps us to get rid of many of the errors that are conducted.

The Third Point is gradual escalation of the authority figure's orders. So, we see the initial commands that are given are very mild. But as the task moves on it escalates and this is exactly what happened in Stanley Milgram's experiment where initially the teacher had to start off giving very mild shocks and eventually as the experiment proceeded, she had to give larger shocks to the person who was learning.

The 4th point is events in many situations which involve destructive obedience, move very quickly.

So, all the participants in the study or the participants in any situation have very little time for reflection or systematic thought. People are ordered to obey and they simply do so. Such conditions also prevailed in Milgram's research, wherein the participants were not given any time to think. If the participant hesitated, the experimenter kept telling them that you must go on. The experiment requires you to go on. Therefore, the participants did not have any time for reflection or systematic thought.

The next topic that we look at is how can this obedience be resisted? So, there are four points to this. The first one speaks about how individuals exposed to commands from authority figures can be reminded that it is they who are responsible for the harm that is produced. So, in the previous part we look at how individuals put all the blame on someone else, put the responsibility on someone else. But the person who is in-charge can be reminded that it is they who are responsible for the outcome over the harm that is produced and not someone else. The next point speaks about how individuals can be provided with clear indication that beyond some point total submission to destructive commands are totally inappropriate. The third point speaks about how individuals may find it easier to resist influence from authority figures if they question the expertise and motives of these figures. And the last point knowing about the power of authority figures to command blind obedience also helps in reducing obedience.

The power the authority figures to command obedience is great, but it is definitely not irresistible. Under appropriate conditions, it can be countered, or it can be reduced. Deciding to resist the commands of people in authority can be highly dangerous.

With this we come to the end of this module. Your books for reference are social psychology by Baron. And essentials of social psychology by Crisp.  
Thank you, students.