

What are the Factors that Influence Non-conformists Not to Conform to Group Norms?

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Abstract

This article aims to study the factors that influence non-conformists not to conform to group norms. In the literature about non-conformity, most of the discussion is on how non-conformists influence the world. The key factors contributing to non-conformity are not yet known. To investigate the factors, qualitative research study was used for a sample size of 20 participants with more than 5 years of work experience from various industries. In light of this possibility, this research uses a grounded theory approach to explore the factors that trigger non-conformists not to conform to group norms. This article lays a foundation for the motivation factors behind non-conformists. The study's findings revealed 13 factors that emerged as the factors that trigger non-conformists not to conform to group norms.

Keywords

Non-conformity, groups, norms, non-conformist

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Introduction

Throughout history, the advancement of human society has often relied on non-conformists who bring innovative and progressive ideas to their group (Grant, 2016; Sunstein, 2019; Wolf & Zuckerman, 2012). Unsurprisingly, non-conformists are often excluded, underappreciated and punished (e.g., Chudek & Henrich, 2011; Grant, 2016; Henrich & Henrich, 2007; Lewis & Sherman, 2010; Marques et al., 2001; Riesman et al., 1950; Tomasello, 2016). In his seminal work on conformity, Asch (1956) demonstrated that individuals may agree with majorities even under conditions where the majority favours an incorrect option. Such conformity has been explained by the individuals' wish to meet the expectations of others, to avoid sanctions or even punishment for deviance, or to create a sense of belonging. Majority influence however is not only successful due to such normative pressures, but also because individuals accept high consensus as evidence about the 'objective' reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955) or as social proof (Cialdini, 1993). They agree with the majority position because high consensus serves as a cue to what is likely to be correct or, in other words, represents the 'objective consensus' (Mackie, 1987).

While Imhoff and Erb (2009) argue that uniqueness seeking blocks majority influence, there might be other factors contributing to non-conformity. Moreover, certain individuals challenge prevailing norms within the organisation by taking initiatives that lead to significant and impactful transformations. In this qualitative inquiry, the study aims to comprehend the motivating factors underlying non-conformists' decision not to adhere to group norms.

Groups, Norms, Conformity and Non-conformity

Groups have been an important focus of many studies in literature. This is because of the recognition of the importance of groups as a relevant unit of analysis for the study of organisations.

In history, research on groups and group processes started in the 1930s when Sherif, Newcomb and Lewin started work on such varied topics as social norms, leadership and group decision-making (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Further development of this happened in the late 1940s and 1950s on cooperation and competition, group structure, social power, conformity and group task performance and problem-solving (Paulus, 1980). The influence of groups on individual behaviour is now, perhaps, taken for granted.

Groups are composed of individuals. Groups have their own identity and characteristics, separate from the identity of their members. This implies that the individuals in a group exhibit behaviours, values, attitudes, or other identifiable patterns that are similar or acceptable to the other group members. This is referred to as 'conformity', and is an important construct necessary for the identification

and categorisation of individuals into 'Groups', without 'conformity', it is difficult to think of groups.

Conformity is defined as 'some behavioral or attitudinal change that occurs as a result of some real or imagined group pressure' (Asch, 1952, as cited in Kiesler, 1969; Berg & Bass, 1961, as cited in Kiesler, 1969; Brown, 1965; Homans, 1961, as cited in Kiesler, 1969; Krech et al., 1962, as cited in Kiesler, 1969; Secord & Backman, 1964; Walker & Heyns, 1962).

Conformity is behaviour 'intended to fulfill normative group expectations as these expectations are perceived by the individual' (Wills, 1965, p. 376). On the contrary, non-conformity is 'behavior which is intended to facilitate the attainment of some goal other than that of fulfilling perceived normative group expectations' (Wills, 1965, p. 378).

Literature refers to this normative group expectation as a norm. Sherif (1936), as cited in McMahan and Kacmar (1991), defines norms as the 'customs, traditions, rules, values, fashions, and any other criteria of conduct which are standardised as a consequence of contact with individuals'. Other scholars refer to norms as the 'acceptable standards of behavior within a group that are shared by the group's members' (Robbins, 1989).

Norms can effectively control certain social situations as well as individual and group behaviours. While controlling these, norms also impact the environment of other individuals, in addition to impacting the enactment of the environment for an individual or group. The evolution and influence of norms have been established through various studies (Abrams et al., 2003; Asch, 1965; Back, 1965; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Coch & French, 1965; Festinger et al., 1965; Jetter et al., 2002; Sherif, 1965; Smith & Bell, 1994). The term 'norms' is generally used to refer to 'group norms', and 'norms' are supposed to be a group-level entity in the existing research (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; Feldman, 1984; Heywood & Aas, 1999; Hoffman, 1957; Kiesler, 1963; Munroe et al., 1999; Persson, 1976; Sanaria, 2004; Sheehan, 1979).

Based on the direction of the individual towards or against the group norms, individuals can be categorised into conformist individuals and non-conformist individuals. In general, conformist individuals are willing to conform to the organisational and group norms and practice more readily than non-conformist individual.

Methods

Procedures

To investigate and understand the factors that influence (conditions that trigger) non-conformists not to conform to group norms. More specifically, the study was aimed at analysing the underlying factors that affect non-conformists not to conform to group norms from an organisation point of view.

To understand the underlying reasoning of the non-conformist, we used qualitative research, particularly the grounded theory approach.

Sampling Procedure

Participants for the research study were chosen using purposive sampling as the goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants strategically.

To explore the answers to the research question, an interview-based research study was conducted. The sample size for the study comprised 20 participants with more than 5 years of work experience, comprising of 16 males and 4 females. Demographics details of the participants are included in Table 1. Interviews were conducted at informal locations at the convenience of the interviewee. Interviews were conducted during the year 2017–2018. The researcher acted as an interviewer during the study.

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of participants' views on factors that influence non-conformists not to conform to group norms. Corporate professionals from different industries are chosen for this study to ensure different perspectives are taken into consideration. So overall perspective or experience is considered. Thus, we attempted to design a study from which the results of a representative sample could be generalised to a larger population.

The same set of questions were asked in the same sequence to all respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Details of Participants.

Interview Reference	Sex	Age	Working Industry	Experience
A1	M	32	IT	7
A2	F	28	IT	5
A3	M	31	Pharmaceutical	8
A4	M	35	Education	10
A5	M	29	Telecommunications	6
A6	M	28	IT	7
A7	F	26	IT	5
A8	M	30	Entertainment	7
A9	M	33	Construction	12
A10	F	27	Media	6
A11	M	34	Manufacturing	11
A12	M	32	IT	9
A13	M	29	IT	8
A14	M	31	Electronics	7
A15	F	30	IT	7
A16	M	28	Hospitality	5
A17	M	34	Consultation	9
A18	M	28	Education	4
A19	M	33	Hospitality	9
A20	M	35	Pharmaceutical	11

Interview Procedure

For the study, interviewees chose to complete the interview face-to-face or over the telephone, whichever was most convenient. Telephone interviews were used alongside face-to-face interviews on the well-defended assumption that both are valuable forms of collecting qualitative data (Cachia & Millward, 2011). One member of the research team carried out the interviews, which lasted approximately 30 min and were recorded to allow for *verbatim* transcription. Not all interviews were recorded; most of them were transcribed.

Interview Protocol

Interview questions were divided into two main sections:

Section 1: ‘Your perception/opinion,’ general, non-intrusive, questions such as: ‘In your own words, how would you describe non-conformist individuals.’

The purpose of the questions in this section was single fold, to ease the participant into the interview process (King, 2004).

Section 2: ‘Specific incident from an organisational point of view about non-conformist individual not conforming to group norms.’

Section 3: What are the factors that influence non-conformists not to conform to group norms?

The purpose of the questions in this section was two-fold; first, to let the participant present the real-life experience and to understand the underlying reason/motive during the interview process (King, 2004).

Throughout the interview, open-ended questions were encouraged, and reflexive, descriptive, and lengthy answers were recorded.

During the process of interview analysis, many safeguards were taken to ensure that the results reflected the participant’s perspective. Following the phenomenological tradition, the epoch was sought through bracketing of personal knowledge and experience by categorising experiences into three different tables. In addition, the transcribed interviews were considered interpretive constructions (Kvale, 1996).

The rich interview material was then transcribed and evaluated by a second researcher (corporate professional) not involved in the present study who is familiar with the literature on non-conformity to maintain objectivity and avoid bias with qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

Reliability and Validity

The first set of analyses investigated from the 20 transcribed interviews conducted were sufficient in providing a rich insight into our research question. One by one, the first 10 interviews resulted in a wealth of new themes. These themes were enriched and developed through the following interviews, and thematic saturation was reached around the 16th interview, as new themes did not appear after this point. This approach is supported by Kvale (1996), who noted that the number of interviews in current studies is generally around 15 ± 10 .

Thus, transcription conventions that made the interview stay as 'alive' as possible and best conveyed the original interview situation were chosen. Rather than forcing the data into predetermined categories arising from the interview guide, we allowed thematic categories to develop out of the data. Furthermore, participants' terms were used in the written interpretations and meaning condensations. Interpretation was carried out at the level of the informant's self-understanding, and no attempt was made to find abstract meanings in participants' statements.

During the process, we kept detailed field notes of impressions, questions and ideas and met weekly to discuss these ideas and detailed process journal.

During coding, to ensure that the interpretation of the data was reliable, three corporate professionals who have an understanding of the organisational behaviour literature were requested to examine and interpret the data to ensure reliability after discussions with the reviewer were complete, the researcher then conducted a final read of the data to determine that the codes represented were those that were a good fit for the data.

Data Analysis

The recursive analysis process was used by reading through all the transcripts to get a sense of the data as a whole. Codes and themes were developed during subsequent readings of transcripts. As emerging themes were developed, we reread transcripts to ensure that the codes and themes represented the whole of the data. The primary way in which reliability was enhanced was by carefully documenting all procedures.

The data collected were analysed first through an analysis of interview transcripts. During the stages of interview transcription and analysis, clear procedural guidelines were set up and followed for each interview. The interviews provided a sound basis for interpretation, as each interview is transcribed in the form of written communication making it possible to transcribe each interview *verbatim*.

For the qualitative analysis, we used the induction process by 'the systematic examination of similarities within and across cases to develop concepts, ideas, or theories' (Pascale, 2011, p. 53).

Many grounded theorists work with open coding in a process of ‘breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

Interview transcripts were analysed through the categorisation process proposed by the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inductive approach is quite similar to the qualitative content analysis process: emergence of relevant categories, development of a categorisation framework grounded in the data, reorganisation of this framework according to the information obtained, etc. The study by Charmaz (2011) makes clear that grounded theory is inductive at its core and will proceed with analysis by comparing data with data (developing codes), comparing data and codes (developing tentative categories), and developing categories into overarching concepts that are compared with (other) theoretical concepts.

In this study, the author of the article was involved in constructing the interview guide as well as in analysing and interpreting the statements.

At the end of the categorisation process, data from the transcriptions were classified into three specific categories based on the narrative of the story and emotion. The categorisation is presented in the following tables: Positive Emotion (Table 2), Negative Emotion (Table 3), and Neutral Emotion (Table 4). Consolidated codes from the three categories of emotions have been listed in Table 5, derived from the primary data conversion.

The three categories are shown in the flow chart in Figure 1.

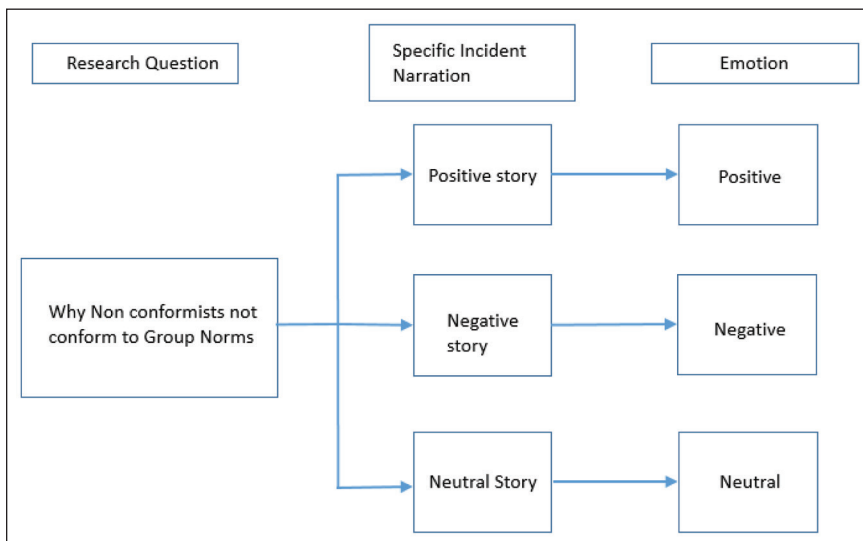


Figure 1. Classification of Nonconformity Story Narrations into Three Different Categories.

Stage 1: Conversion of Interview Material to Themes and Codes

Specific Incident Narrations

Table 2. Positive Emotion.

Interview Reference	Specific Incident Narration	Interpretation (Thematic Code)	Emotion
A6	Greg (name changed) after spending 12 fruitful years at the firm quit after seeing the interests of the client were being side-lined for the interest of the firm's profits and growth. Here, the NCI now conforms due to the moral high ground he's taking as he believes his culture and morals have changed over time and after a point when it starts affecting his pride, it leads to his non-conformance and in this case his resignation.	Moral: holding or manifesting high principles for proper conduct	Positive
A9	Non-conformists have a wide spectrum of reasons ranging from irrational rebels to altruistic behaviour; needless to say, society and the behavioural implications of those around them play a vital role in non-conformity some of the reasons are: (1) Driven by a deep sense of justice	Justice: The quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: to uphold the justice of a cause Unique: Being the only one of its kind	Positive
A10	(2) Need to stand out in a crowd to be perceived as unique Even though he would be unemployed in going against the decision of the top management, he believed what was right for the safety of the employees and labour workers on the shaft floor and took the decision rightly which at the end of the day benefits the whole organisation.	Belief: a principle, proposition, idea accepted as true	Positive
A11	A teetotaler who views alcohol consumption as a violation of religious norms shall never conform to drinking even if he is amidst a group of chain smokers and drinkers as he attaches himself with a greater sense of purpose in not doing those.	Great sense of purpose (able to find meaning)	Positive
A12	Self-principle is very important for any person to abide by in the organisation or else it will all be a herd of cows led by one man. We need to speak out of our minds and tell what is going so wrong in there. It takes a lot of courage to stick to what you feel is right and stand for it no matter how many people oppose you for not being part of the group. She believed in her conscience and did not let her values or integrity get compromised. Even though she knew she would be unemployed she believed in what was right and took the decision of leaving the company. The sense of belief in oneself is very important. Being under pressure did not let her give up on her moral beliefs.	Self-principle and courage Moral beliefs	Positive

(Table 2 continued)

(Table 2 continued)

Interview Reference	Specific Incident Narration	Interpretation (Thematic Code)	Emotion
A13	<p>In my point of view, the non-conformist will not conform to group norms under pressure because I think it is all in their belief to stand for what is right or wrong. They believe in ethics, moral values, integrity, a set of rules that gives them a sense of direction, etc. Asserting their individuality and independence.</p> <p>Conforming to certain group norms limits or restricts you in many possible aspects. A non-conformist wants to live a life of his own where he has the liberty to follow his/her dream. He stood for what he believed in and was not ready to change his beliefs just to conform to social beliefs.</p> <p>They believe in knowledge perspective theory and have full faith in their knowledge and its applications.</p>	<p>Belief in ethics, moral values, integrity, set of rules that give them a sense of direction</p> <p>Individuality and independence</p> <p>Liberty to follow his dreams (independence)</p> <p>Strong belief</p> <p>Faith in themselves</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p>
A14	<p>NC people do not believe in being in a herd of sheep and do what their group decides, but raise a voice for truth and belief.</p> <p>Does things differently from the majority of people, not for the sake of being different and special but because they prefer to do so.</p> <p>NC people have priority for their matter, no wonder how different it could be from group norms. They perform better and more creatively, only when they work on their topic, irrespective of its differentiation or specialty in nature. Their performance is enhanced by working on their perception. They comply with the sense-making theory and affirm their decisions till they make sense.</p> <p>Concluding that non-conformist would stick to his/her ideas, as per their perception, even though the whole group has their idea, until and unless he/she believes his point of view to be true and viable.</p> <p>If a person dares to face the consequences by not conforming to the group, whatever happens, he/she will stick to their idea.</p>	<p>Truth and belief</p> <p>Individual preferences</p> <p>Sense-making</p> <p>Belief, truth and viable</p> <p>Strong conviction</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Positive</p>
A16	<p>For non-conformists, conformity seems to be in opposition to creativity, innovation, change and progress. For example, scientists arguably value unconventional thinking. A scientist is expected to come up with new ideas and challenge existing theories. Are they conforming to the dominant practices of their group?</p>	<p>Unconventional thinking to create, innovate and progress</p>	<p>Positive</p>

Table 3. Negative Emotion.

Interview Reference	Specific Incident Narration	Interpretation (Thematic Code)	Emotion
A1	According to me the non-conformity of the guy was a lack of knowledge about the project, an ego to accept the group decisions, overconfidence.	Ego	Negative
A3	It can be due to a bitter experience. Can be because of his perception. He may have thought that this operation system would reduce his profits. Fear factor/fear of failure. He might have feared that this kind of big customer is tough to handle. Change/diversion from the regular process. For him, this kind of costing system is different from his usual system. He may not be able to execute correctly. Trust issues. In this case, if there are any malpractices then it will be a huge loss for the distributor. If proper measures are not taken and no regular checks are done, new problems will arise.	Bitter past experience False perception Fear Resistance to change Mistrust	Negative Negative Negative Negative Negative
A4	Therefore, being a non-conformist (development manager) was dictated by the need to produce results, pressure to deliver, unethical and low moral baseline.	Pressure to deliver (psychological stress)	Negative
A5	I was very disappointed by this incident as I was still on a probation period and was not aware of all the compliance and culture of the bank, and on the other hand I was responsible for bank money and compliance. After this incident, they started ignoring me. I tried a lot to convince them that this is unethical and we all could be in trouble.	Unethical: not morally correct Low-moral people do not follow principles of proper conduct Unethical: not morally correct	Negative Negative Negative
A6	Hence the easiest way to make this presence felt would be to not conform. (Here the individual's cognitive response is CI, but behaviourally non-conforms.) When the individual is biased and hungry for power, as default he non-conforms.	Hungry for power (To make their presence felt by pride and position, they will not conform.)	Negative

(Table 3 continued)

(Table 3 continued)

Interview Reference	Specific Incident Narration	Interpretation (Thematic Code)	Emotion
A8	<p>The IP manager of Airtel manager that was not agreeing with me in the beginning had a valid reasons from his end because he might have felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It was a pressure situation and the project had a fast start. <p>His way of planning was router-wise, mine was BSC-wise, and so was something new for him, which he did not want to experiment with to avoid risks.</p>	<p>Pressure to deliver</p> <p>Resistance to change</p>	<p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p>
A8	<p>Non-conformists have a wide spectrum of reasons ranging from irrational rebels to altruistic behaviour; needless to say, society and the behavioural implications of those around them play a vital role in non-conformity. Some of the reasons are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Need to dominate either in a conversation or action(2) Psychological inclination to non-conform due to deep-set trauma or behavioural erraticism	<p>Dominate in conversation or action (sense of superiority)</p> <p>Trauma deeply distressing or disturbing experience.</p>	<p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p>
All	<p>Non-conforming to groups under pressure by some people can be because of one of the four reasons.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sense of superiority (Ego).2. Lack of adaptability.3. Lacking a sense of fear of intended/unintended consequences or a tendency to face challenges come what may.4. Improper environmental influences in the childhood.5. Culture and ethics.	<p>Ego</p> <p>Resistance to change</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Uncertainty</p> <p>Bitter experience</p> <p>Ethics: Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity</p>	<p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p>

<p>Of the majority of the non-conformists I have seen to date, most of them either had a turbulent childhood (separated parents, utter poverty) which made them think and be independent from a very young age</p> <p>People who feel superior to others (physically, monetarily, mentally and spiritually) also do not conform to rules and look down upon the members of other groups. These people when made the leaders of their respective groups often tend to be poor listeners and drive the group through their non-conformist ideas.</p> <p>People who tend to spend most of their lives in the same place often lack adaptability and become non-conformists because of their own biases and prejudices.</p> <p>Culture and ethics also play an important role in making non-conformists not conform to group norms, which they may see as culturally wrong or morally unethical.</p>	<p>Bitter experience</p> <p>Sense of superiority</p> <p>Resistance to change</p> <p>Culture and ethics</p> <p>Childhood pressure influences have an impact on non-conformists</p> <p>Bitter experience</p> <p>Power of position and pride</p> <p>Sense of superiority</p> <p>Resistance to change or accept others</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Egoistic and high self-esteem</p>	<p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p> <p>Negative</p>
<p>A) Parental pressure.</p>		
<p>B) Experience from past: Cheated in walks of life, trust issues, suspicious of everyone and everything. He tends to believe everything around him is a conspiracy against him.</p>		
<p>C) Misuse of power/authority/seniority.</p>		
<p>A sense of superiority (ego) mainly comes when a person stays at a company for a long time and has a lot of experience.</p> <p>Lack of adaptability when they get exposed to the comfort zone.</p> <p>Lacking a sense of fear of intended/unintended consequences or a tendency to face challenges come what may.</p>		
<p>Egoistic and a person with high self-esteem can be a non-conformist. Because they want to be a leader.</p>		

Table 4. Neutral Emotion.

Interview Reference	Specific Incident Narration	Interpretation (Thematic Code)	Emotion
A2	Everyone gives bribes. Everyone gets things done under the towel. Mr A could have just done the same and kept the job or even gotten a promotion or hike. But for Mr A, it was about his culture and his ethics. It was on whether he would compromise his values for the benefit of the organisation and he found that he could not.	Individual nature and ethics	Neutral
	As per my analysis of various case studies, I have found that one of the biggest reasons for a non-conformist not to conform to a group norm is because his norms do not match with the group norms.	Individual norms	Neutral
A13	For that person, his values of not taking alcohol are more important than consuming it.	Individual values	Neutral
	An arrogant person will not conform to anyone or anything because of his traits	Personality trait	Neutral
	To conclude a non-conform individual may react to a situation depending on his psychological state or his behavioural state.	Psychological state	Neutral
	A non-conform person is different because he might value situations in a different manner than others.	Point of view or value	Neutral
A14	She could have sat quiet, but rather moved against the common decision of their group of sexually abused employees and complained, as it was a matter of truth.	Truth	Neutral

Stage 2: Interpreting the Interview Recordings/Transcribed Interview with Three Corporate Professionals and the Factors Which they Consider the Factors of Non-conformity

In this study, the author requested three corporate professionals with prior work experience who understand the literature of the study to analyse the interview material to interpret the meaning and mention the code.

Overall, 100 codes were received from 3 corporate professionals.

Table 5. Consolidated Qualitative Themes, Tabulated by Emotions (Positive, Negative and Neutral).

Three Different types of Categories (Factors) Evolved from Primary Data Conversion			
	Category A	Category B	Category C
S No.	Positive	Negative	Neutral
1	Own belief system and morals	Lack of knowledge	Culture and ethics
2	Past behaviours	Ego	Individual norms
3	Moral principles	Overconfidence	Perception
4	Independence	Bitter past experiences	Culture and ethics
5	Authentic	False perception	Moral benefits
6	Driven by a deep sense of justice (Quality of being just righteousness, equitableness, justice of care	Fear	Integrity
7	Unique	Resistance to change	Individual values
8	Great sense of purpose	Do not trust	Personality trait
9	Self-principle and courage	Unethical	Psychological state
10	Individuality and independence	Hungry for power	Point of view
11	Liberty to follow their dreams	Pressure to deliver	Individual preferences
12	Faith in themselves	Doubt on others' strength (Do not believe and they will not confirm)	Uncertainty
13	Truth and belief	Sense of superiority	
14	Sense-making	Trauma, a deep disturbing experience	
15	Vision is clear	Physical inclination	
16	Integrity and loyalty	Erratic (Unpredictability in Behaviour)	
17	Unconventional thinking to create, innovate and progress	Illogical and orthodox	
18		Parental pressure	
19		Miss use of authority (Power of position & pride)	
20		Lack of understanding	
21		Egoistic and high self-esteem	

Stage 3: Consolidating the Themes, Codes and Endorsement of Each Factor Developed by Three Corporate Professionals and a Researcher

After receiving the codes, three corporate professionals along with the researcher categorised how many times each factor is considered as the factor for non-conformity.

Table 6 shows the thematic groupings and top 13 endorsed factors of corporate professionals and authors.

Table 6. Top 13 Factors Emerged from Data Analysis.

Top 13 Factors from the Data Analysis			
No.	Factors	Endorsement with Corporate Professionals and Authors	Number of Times Endorsed by Corporate Professionals and Researchers of the Study
1	Own belief system and morals	CP 1 (A 12), CP 2 (A 5), CP 2 (A 6) Researcher 1 (A 6, A 10, A 12, A 13, A 14)	8
2	Bitter past experiences	CP 3 (A 6), CP 2 (A 1), CP 2 (A 12), CP 2 (A 15) Researcher 1 (A 3, A 11, A 15)	7
3	Individual culture and ethics	CP 1 (A 10), CP 3 (A 2), CP 3 (A 6), CP 3 (A 11), Researcher 1 (A 2, A 6, A 11)	7
4	Egoistic and high self-esteem	CP 1 (A 5), CP 3 (A 6), CP 2 (A 2) Researcher 1 A (1,11,17)	6
5	Uncertainty	CP 2 (A 2), Researcher 1 (A 11, A 16, A 17)	4
6	Fear	CP 2 (A 6), Researcher 1 (A 3, A 11, A 16)	4
7	Driven by a deep sense of justice (Quality of being just righteousness, equitableness, justice of care	CP 3 (A 12), CP 3 (A 14), Researcher 1 (A 9)	3
8	Uniqueness	CP 1 (A 11), CP 3 (A 17), Researcher 1 (A 9)	3
9	Perception	CP 2 (A 4), Researcher 1 (A 3)	2
10	Ethics and morals	CP 3 (A 6), CP 2 (A 13)	2
11	Individual personality	CP 2 (A 9), CP 2 (A 11)	2
12	Sense of superiority	CP 2 (A 7), CP 2 (A 14)	2
13	Unconventional thinking to create, innovate and progress	CP 2 (A 2), Researcher 1 (A 16)	2

Notes: CP: Corporate Professional (CP 1, CP 2, CP 3); A: Interview reference; Researcher: Author of the study.

Findings

Based on thorough qualitative inquiry using a grounded theory approach, this study found that three categories emerged from the data based on the experiences of the individual not to conform to group norms. The three categories are classified

based on the emotions these individuals experienced when they encountered pressure to conform in the organisational context. The classification is based on positive, negative and neutral emotions (Tables 2–4). As discussed in the tables, first, the underlying motivation not to conform to group norms when individuals experience positive emotion is based on their belief system and moral principles; these individuals are driven by a deep sense of justice and a great sense of purpose and their unconventional thinking to create, innovate and progress propels them not to conform to group norms. These individuals have strong faith in themselves and dare to challenge the status quo and drive for positive change.

Second, when individuals experience negative emotions, they are less likely to conform to group norms. Data revealed that when individuals go through bitter past experiences they are hooked on their own emotions and hold false perceptions about the group practices and they are less likely to conform to group norms. These individuals do not trust and because of their egoistic nature and their lack of empathy to understand, these characteristics make these individuals less likely to conform to group norms.

Third, when individuals experience neutral emotions (neither positive nor negative), they may be less likely to conform because of the influence of culture and ethical practices one follows; these certainly can influence the way an individual thinks and acts and may lead to non-conformity with the group norms.

Finally, the researcher along with three corporate professionals analysed the data and marked the codes based on the analysis, and after analysis 13 key factors have been ranked based on their repeated mention of the reason for non-conformity. Among several factors why individuals do not conform to group norms presented in Tables 2–4, factors presented in Table 6 are the key factors that lead to non-conformity.

These findings will hopefully aid in future theory building and development of non-conformity, non-conformists and organisation transformation.

Practical Implications

In organisations, decision-making at the individual level/group level is important to achieve a goal. Few individuals conform and few others do not. In a few instances, the non-conformist viewpoint is abandoned and considered of the least importance; however, individuals who raise voice are turned to bring about constructive change in the organisation (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). On the one hand, it is important for human resource managers, Supervisor/Group members, to conduct regular organisational culture and climate audits to understand employees' perceptions of socially acceptable behaviours.

Analysing their viewpoints and underlying reasons for non-conformity can help the organisation at a group level. If the underlying factor for non-conformity is due to unconventional thinking and desire to grow and innovate, a Sense of purpose for the greater good, and holding moral values/Ethical values which play vital role for the positive organisational change.

This in turn helps for the growth of the Individual and positively contributes to the group. Organisations will also benefit from increasing their innovation levels.

Innovation is mainly driven by non-conformists, who defy the existing practices and Norms, envision a different solution from the status quo and successfully implement a new solution despite all the resistance from existing vested interests in the organisation. This article helps novice leaders understand their own and others' motivations for non-conformance and the factors influencing their behaviours. This provides a useful approach to dealing with non-conformist individuals to achieve desirable results in the organisation. This article is also relevant for entrepreneurs as well as social and political leaders. This article categorises, integrates, and extends our knowledge about non-conformists. This is useful for future researchers and practitioners to identify knowledge gaps and address organisational transformational challenges.

Conclusion

Non-conformity is important because it can profoundly impact the organisation and its members. Although numerous research studies have investigated the impact of non-conformity on groups and organisations, the underlying factors that lead to non-conformity are unclear. In particular, this article identifies certain underlying factors for non-conformity to bring about a positive change in organisations, for example, factors such as good intentions to create, to innovate, a sense of purpose for the greater good, appreciation of individual uniqueness and considering moral and ethical values. Second, non-conformity can also occur because of the sense of superiority, ego and false beliefs, which would then have negative effects on the growth of the organisation. This study provides factors leading to non-conformity in organisations by identifying new lines of inquiry and providing important managerial insights into effectively managing workplace norms, a highly important and relevant topic for organisations today. Hope this article will help inspire more valuable and critical research to better understand how non-conformity impacts in different organisational contexts and how organisations respond to non-conformity to foster a better workplace with more effective people and performance.

Future Recommendations

Future studies can consider how the above-mentioned 13 individual variables affect non-conformity at various instances at the organisational level and its impact at a group and individual level. Future work should examine how these factors impact various industries. Future research could enhance the article's scope by better understanding non-conformity factors in a different context. Finally, future works investigating these paths will deepen our understanding of non-conformity, and would also open new research avenues.

Limitations

The qualitative research relies on the interpretation of researcher, which introduces subjectivity and the potential for bias. While efforts have been made to mitigate

subjectivity bias, it is possible that some level of subjectivity bias remains in the study.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol, Follow-up Session

The following questions were posed to the interviewee:

- Question 1.** ‘Your perception/opinion’, general, nonintrusive, questions such as: ‘In your own words, how would you describe non-conformist individuals?’
- Question 2.** ‘Specific incident from an organisational point of view about non-conformist individual not conforming to group norms.’
- Question 3.** What are the factors that influence non-conformists not to conform to group norms?

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