

Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 1: Social Influence

Agentic state: An explanation of obedience, in which individuals carry out orders as an “agent” for a figure of authority. These individuals no longer view their decisions as autonomous or take responsibility for their actions.

Compliance: A superficial change in an individual’s behaviour to comply with that of a group, which only exists in the presence of the group. The individual’s internal beliefs remain unchanged.

Identification: A change in an individual’s behaviour and internal beliefs to that of a specific group, but only in the presence of that group.

Internalisation: A complete change in an individual’s behaviour and internal beliefs to conform with a group. These changes exist outside of the presence of the group.

Informational social influence: When an individual conforms due to the belief that someone holds more knowledge than themselves and therefore is more likely to be right.

Legitimacy of authority: An explanation of obedience in which an individual obeys someone in a perceived higher position of authority or in the social hierarchy.

Locus of control: An explanation of either resistance or conformity to social influence. The idea of an individual to explain events in their life, either by attributing them to external or internal control.

Normative social influence: When an individual conforms due to the belief that they will be ostracised or perceived negatively if they do not.

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