

Why Should One Conform to the Social Norms?

I) Introduction:

Thesis Statement: Social norms play a crucial role in maintaining social order, fostering cohesion and facilitating cooperation and communication within a given community. Therefore, to enhance social harmony, to facilitate social integration, to promote positive interaction and to establish cultural identity one should conform to the social norms.

(II) Social norms and its key features.

(III) Inextricable relationship between social norms and social prosperity.

- a) Functionalist Approach
- b) Structural-Functionalist Theory
- c) Symbolic Interactionism
- d) Social Control Theory

(IV) Reasons for compliance to the social norms.

- a) Normative Social Influence
- b) Consensus Theory
- c) Herbert Mead's Approach
- d) Herbert Spencer's structural Functionalism
- e) Talcott Parson's viewpoint
- f) Travis Hirschi's Argument

(V) Comparative study of societies that followed and ~~these~~ vice versa.

- a) Case study: Japan
- b) Singapore
- c) Cambodia (Khmer Rouge Era)
- d) Soviet Union

VI Overall Implications of conformity and non-conformity

- a) Social order and stability established ^{can be} by conforming the social norms and disrupted if deviated.

- b) Social harmony, cultural identity, positive interaction and ~~face~~ social integration.
- c) Social disintegration, cultural degeneration, negative or indifferent interaction prevail if social norms are not followed.

(VII) Conclusions

Social norms refer to the shared understanding, expectations or guidance within a ^{social} group. According to UNICEF, social norms are the perceived informal, mostly unwritten rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions within a given group or community, thus guiding human behavior. However, different sociologists emphasize specific aspects of social norms. For example, functionalist may highlight the role of norms in maintaining social stability while interactionist associate it with normative behavior of individuals. Beside all, social norms play a vital role in maintaining social order, boosting social cohesion, facilitating cooperation and promoting cultural unity. They are learned through socialization process and can vary across ^{history} cultures and subcultures. Such norms encompass a wide range of behaviors, from etiquette and manners to more deeply ingrained cultural and moral expectations.

Social norms are the accepted and expected behaviors, beliefs and customs within a particular society. They represent the unwritten guidelines that dictate how individuals should behave in different social contexts. Such norms can cover a wide range of aspects, including manners, dress codes, language usage and impersonal interactions. The key features of social norms include the implicit rules of socialization and interaction, shared expectations, greetings and customs, dress code (generally expected at weddings, funerals or job interviews) and the list goes on.

The horizons of social norms are very broad touching almost every possible aspect of individual's life through guidance, warnings, rewards and punishments. So that these social norms could be enforced time and again. This way the process of cultural continuity is kept intact.

Moreover, one cannot deny the inextricable relationship between social norms' conformity and social prosperity. Although, intellectuals like Ralph Aldo Emerson does not approve the notion of social conformity by associating it with stagnant ^{individuals'} development in his essay "Self-Reliance". But social scientist and theorist highly advocate conformity to the social norms in order to achieve a prosperous society. In this regard certain theories have been proposed such as functionalism, structural-functionism.

- Symbolic interactionism and social control theories.
1. Functionalist approach view social norms as a framework for expected behavior contributing to the social order and stability. When people follow shared norms, it reduces the chances of frequent chaos and promotes a sense of predictability of social harmony.

Similarly, structural functionalism emphasizes the role of social structures including norms in establishing social integration and maintaining social stability. It draws a connection between evolutionary process of social development, prosperity and adherence to the social norms. It proposes the idea that people kept intact their social norms that were beneficial and added to their prosperity and in this way societies have evolved.

Moreover, Symbolic interactionism focuses the individual level interaction also known as the micro level interactions and it attempts to highlight the role of symbols and shared meanings in shaping social reality. And following social norms is considered crucial for successful communication and interaction, as it enables individual to respond to each other in an expected manner.

In addition to that, social control theory suggests that individuals are motivated to conform to social norms, to avoid deviance and maintain positive social relationships. It emphasizes the role of social bonds that prevent individuals from deviant behavior.

Thus, social norm when practiced according to the shared knowledge and expected terms, it becomes a binding force for the society that prevents any sort of ^{social} disintegration. Social norms have numerous benefits therefore they are enforced and re-enforced in our societies.

There are various reasons for compliance to social norms such as social reasons, psychological reasons and political reasons. Firstly, normative social influences it explores how individuals conform to social norms? It proposes the notion that it is due to the desire of social acceptability. According to the social psychologist Solomon Asch individuals possess this desire to be socially approved and avoid rejection. It is the psychological and social motivation for individuals within a community due to which they conform to the social norms. This approach is also consistent with the reward and punishment mechanism. When individuals perform an act or behave in a certain manner, they are rewarded or punished. If kids behave according to the socially standard norms they are rewarded by their family, relatives and ^{the} society. On the other hand, if kids behave contrary to the social expectation, they are punished. Thus, it is the social and psychological motivation that drives social ^{norms} conformity.

1 Secondly, the consensus theory highlights the view point that societal order is based on general agreement among members regarding values, norms and rules. Therefore, following social norms is considered essential for maintaining this consensus and preventing conflict and social disintegration. This theory aligns with the social contract theory, in which people entered into an agreement by their will so that in return their lives, properties and liberties could be safeguarded. This agreement among the members binds them to follow the expected behavior so that individuals may not harm each other. In this way social integrity could be kept intact. Auguste Comte, an intellectual ~~and~~ and key theorist of consensus theory emphasizes the common, general agreement among the members of the society with respect to their shared knowledge, customs and values. As there is a general consensus among the individuals of the society, therefore they follow social norms even after thousands of years.

~~Herbert~~
According to anthropologists such as George Herbert Mead, "The self and socialization", the development of self is the result of socialization process. Self is not present at birth but it emerges through social interaction and communication. Individuals learn to take on the perspectives of others and incorporate

Societal expectation. The concept of "I" and "Me" explains the internal dialogue where "Me" is the internalized social self shaped by societal expectation and norms. Mead emphasized the importance of role-taking in social interactions. Through role-playing and taking on the perspectives of others, individuals internalize social norms and expectation. Conforming to social norms, according to Mead is the result of individuals incorporating these norms into their self concept. Therefore, it is the process of social-interaction that plays a vital role in compliance to the social norms as these norms are incorporated in individuals by birth. Thus individuals follow the social norms as they keep on growing.