

## An Exploratory Study on the Difference between Online and Offline Conformity Behavior among Chinese College Students

**Authors :** Xinyue Ma, Dishen Zhang, Yijun Liu, Yutian Jiang, Huiyan Yu, Chufeng Gu

**Abstract :** Conformity is defined as one in a social group changing his or her behavior to match the others' behavior in the group. It is used to find that people show a higher level of online conformity behavior than offline. However, as anonymity can decrease the level of online conformity behavior, the difference between online and offline conformity behavior among Chinese college students still needs to be tested. In this study, college students (N = 60) have been randomly assigned into three groups: control group, offline experimental group, and online experimental group. Through comparing the results of offline experimental group and online experimental group with the Mann-Whitney U test, this study verified the results of Asch's experiment, and found out that people show a lower level of online conformity behavior than offline, which contradicted the previous finding found in China. These results can be used to explain why some people make a lot of vicious remarks and radical ideas on the Internet but perform normally in their real life: the anonymity of the network makes the online group pressure less than offline, so people are less likely to conform to social norms and public opinions on the Internet. What is more, these results support the importance and relevance of online voting, because fewer online group pressures make it easier for people to expose their true ideas, thus gathering more comprehensive and truthful views and opinions.

**Keywords :** anonymity, Asch's group conformity, Chinese college students, online conformity

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