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The Trustworthiness of the Stanford Prison Experiment

Discussing one of the most controversial processes in psychological studies, one may mention the Stanford Prison Experiment. This experiment was aimed at examining the psychological effects of obtaining power over other individuals. Even though the experiment was terminated after the disturbing behavior of the sample group, the results managed to show that perceived power has a significant influence on the morality of a person. However, it is vital to mention that its results cannot be considered valid or credible due to the questionable methods and procedures for conducting the experiment.

The sample group of the experiment were volunteers who had agreed to participate in a study of the psychological effects of being in prison. Notably, all the participants were promised to receive money for the participation. The method of the experiment implied that the participants would be randomly assigned to the roles of prisoners or guards. In order to obtain valid results, the volunteers were asked to act naturally and yet comply with the rules of the assigned roles (Zimbardo). The participants were also restricted in certain rights and required to follow the procedures of prison life. Eventually, the prison guards expressed deviations in behavior and started to demonstrate excessive violence against the prisoners. Hence, the experiment managed to show that perceived authority negatively impacts the moral principles of

an individual.

Nevertheless, recent academic works devoted to the reevaluation of the Stanford Prison Experiment managed to provide sufficient arguments concerning the unscientific nature and implications of this study. Namely, the participants of the experiment reported that they were instructed concerning the behavior by its leader and his assistants. The researchers provided guidelines and facilitated a particular type of behavior. This notion interferes with the concept of an experiment that the participants should act naturally and according to the circumstances (Blum). Since certain elements of the experiments were constructed in the middle of the process, one may admit that the researchers wanted to achieve the desired results by manipulating the participants. Thus, this consideration appeals to the fact that the conclusions of the experiments might be an attempt to meet expectations and provide impressive results.

The criticism of the Stanford Prison Experiment led to a discussion that psychological studies should be reevaluated and tested concerning their validity. Primarily, it is due to the fact that scientific criticism is a significant part of making discoveries. Although the conclusions from the Stanford prison experiment were appealing and made a meaningful contribution to field of psychology, it is vital for contemporary scientists to challenge these conclusions to find the truth. The exposed materials and criticism of the Stanford Prison Experiment managed to show that the results of this observation do not have scientific validity or can be considered credible. The main factor that influenced the researchers of this experiment to provide the particular results is the notion that inconclusive studies are not relevant to scientific discourse.

Consequently, one may agree that the Stanford Prison Experiment can be considered as a psychological demonstration rather than a valid experiment. The fact the behavior of certain

participants was influenced by its researchers contradicts the initial goal of the study. In addition, the unwillingness of the researchers to reveal the inconclusive results might be the reason why certain procedures of the experiment were manipulated and conducted inappropriately.

Works cited

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