
Stanford Prison Experiment: The Impact Of The Environment On People

Environment and roles a person assumes tend to have an impact on their thinking and action. A person who is humiliated continuously is likely to become helpless and develop massive levels of submission. On the other side, a person who is given various powers to execute some roles is likely to grow a character similar to the norm of the functions and capabilities, regardless of their typical nature. Philip Zimbardo experimented at Stanford University, where he studied the impact of the prison environment on the prisoners, guards, and prison wardens.

The experiment was carried out in a basement room within the Stanford University where Philip Zimbardo was a psychology professor. Eleven participants were recruited inclusive of guards and prisoners, and Zimbardo assumed the roles of a prison warden. The prisoners were to be arrested randomly from their homes and taken to the local policemen. They would then be covered their faces and taken to the fake prison at Stanford. In prison, they were stripped naked, given prison uniforms and an identification number that would be used as their names. Their belongings were also taken and closed up. On the other side, the guards were given uniforms similar to that of real prison guards. The experiment took only six days, although it was intended to take two weeks. In those six days, different aspects were observed. First, the guards easily assumed their roles and expressed brutal and sadist personalities towards the prisoners. They could be grouped in classes of friendly, cruel, and most cruel. This depended on how they treated the prisoners. The prisoners were rebellious at first. However, they developed a sign of helplessness, and with time their submissiveness to the guards developed. Some expressed withdrawal symptoms and kept on crying and wanting to leave the prison. However, their assumed feeling of being in a real jail made them unable to leave as they required a lawyer to do so. One prisoner was extremely overwhelmed with prison life and could not take it anymore. However, when the Zimbardo informed him that that was not a real prison, it was a psychological experiment, told him his name, he became okay, and his withdrawal symptoms vanished.

This experiment has enormous implications for the recreational facilities on their roles and what is ethical. First, the behavior of the prisoners and the guards insinuates the prison environment dramatically impacts how the participants start feeling of themselves once in prison. The guards assume the stereotyped characters of being aggressive, sadist, and cruel to the prisoners. They begin looking at prisoners as a less human being. On the other side, the prisoners forget their authentic self and assume that of a criminal. No matter how much they are oppressed, they submit more as they feel helpless and less of human beings. According to the experiment, the

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torture given to the prisoners by the guards has a substantial negative impact on their mental wellness. The research also exposes the broken system in the correctional centers. Correction centers are meant to correct the wrong behaviors of prisoners and not to torture cause mental traumas to them. Zimbardo prison experiment is eye-opening on the impact of a person's environment to their behaviors. Again it brings an insight into how power can influence a person's actions to other people. The prisoners are not mentally ill people or are the guards violent and sadist, but the prison environment and stereotypes highly influence their behaviors.

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