

8th ICEEPSY 2017
**The International Conference on Education & Educational
Psychology**

**A STUDY OF THE RELATION BETWEEN NORM VIOLATION
AND POWER PERCEPTION IN INDIVIDUALS**

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Abstract

Power is often perceived negatively because people act on will and sometimes rise above rules. The aim of this paper is to study how breaking rules and violating norms gives people this power. Violating a norm implies intentionally, or unintentionally going against a social norm imposed by society. It gives the assumption that individuals have the capacity to transgress rules which fuels power perception. In this paper we have two studies to support these hypotheses. Individuals who broke a traffic light (study 1) and an individual who violated a classroom setting (study 2) were perceived as more powerful than the individuals in the control group who abided by all social norms. The effect was tested by presenting a scenario and a video and the results were quite significantly in the research's favor. This paper also discusses how norm violators are associated with aggression whereas norm abiders are perceived as more compliant.

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Keywords: Norm, norm violation, power perception.

1. Introduction

“Power is always dangerous. Power attracts the worst and corrupts the best.”

This insight by Edward Abbey reflects not only deep philosophical understanding but is also clearly manifested in human behavior. Power is something individuals strive for. Power dynamics play an important role in everyday life. Studies have now shown us that individuals who defy norms are seen as more powerful and this exhibition of norm violation leads to others perceiving them as high-power



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individuals as compared to low-power individuals (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, 2011). According to Merriam-Webster, a norm is considered as a principle of right action, binding upon the members of a group to regulate proper and acceptable behavior (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Norm violation, in any society, is considered inappropriate behavior. For example, in the context of Karachi, the norm is that a girl should have long hair as opposed to a pixie cut. Girls who get such “boy” cuts are perceived differently by the general society, keeping stereotypes asides. These girls are, interestingly enough, norm violators but they are perceived as more assertive than their counterparts who comply with norms. Many studies have proven that norm violation and power perception have a relation. Moreover, power is related to status as well, they have a negative correlation. But also that powerful people don’t stress in situations. It also has been proven that powerful individuals don’t conform to the norm, not only through physical attributes but also by expressing opinions that are vastly different to the opinions expressed by the majority. This has been proved in one of the studies conducted previously on this topic

This will also be the aim of our research, to verify this in the context of Karachi. We know that the concept of power is different in our culture, because of the social conditions we live under, and hence we will investigate if the perceptions are different from the results obtained in other countries. Merriam-Webster defines power to be “the ability or right to control people or things” (Merriam-Webster, 2015). In our study, we intend to measure power perception in individuals through questionnaires from the original study. Power perception is when an individual believes that another has the ability to control and at times defy their social situations giving them more influence over their surroundings. For example, if I see someone traveling in limousines, I will assume that this person is rich, and if is rich, and then for sure holds some kind of power.

The fundamental aim of our study is to find out if people perceive norm violation as acts that are more powerful. The basic understanding is that norms are acceptable behaviors, so it comes as mild astonishment that the norm violators are perceived as influential. It seems as if the people who violate the norms are more influential if they do not care about the consequences that their actions will have. Our study also aims to measure the perception of those individuals which are considered as low power individuals. The basic structure will consist of two separate studies; the first will describe a scenario in a questionnaire and after reading it, the participants will answer an 18-item questionnaire on that particular scenario; in the second study, we will show the participants two videos, one which will show the norm violation aspects while the other will display the control condition (social conforming condition) and then the participants will answer a questionnaire.

The authors of the original study, *Breaking the Rules to Rise to Power*, conducted a cross cultural study with one of the countries being Pakistan, but due to logistical constraints, the study is not ready to be published as yet. So we are trying conduct this study in Pakistani context and to determine how culture might play a part in power perception.

2. Literature Review

Previously, there has been an extensive amount of research conducted on this topic, with various research methods and designs, but all of which pertained similar results. It seems the concept of power is

an important one because power influences individuals. In the wrong hands, power can be fatal because it can go so far as to encourage individuals to commit crimes or other heinous acts (Milgram, 1963). The participants who were given the role of the guards quickly adopted the personalities of prison guards while the prisoners were demeaned and humiliated constantly. This shows that just by appointing roles to individuals can have a huge impact on their personalities. In a similar study, we see that individuals have the ability to conform quite easily (Asch, 1956). With the use of 7 confederates, Asch proved that individuals usually agreed to the popular answer rather than think. Furthermore, giving superior roles to individuals changes the attitude of individuals as well (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). In a review conducted by Kleef et al 2015, further emphasizes the hypothesis that the individuals who are perceived with the role of power, are the ones who violate the norms (Van Kleef, Wanders, Stamkou, & Homan, 2015). Moreover, studies have shown that when people don't conform in social situations, their behavior is considered not normal (Nail, Macdonald, & Levy, 2000). Furthermore, in addition to the role of power play and norm violation, it was found that upper class residents were more likely to break the rules or take what was someone else's as opposed to lower class residents. The reasons for that was they thought that everyone else would do the same, for instance, breaking a traffic light.

Similar to the original study of this research, another study was conducted by Kleef et al 2012, with the same hypothesis, with a slight difference in that the behavior of the norm violating individual is considered as powerful when the actions are beneficial rather than harmful to the environment (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Blaker, & Heerdink, 2012). One of the three studies was a laboratory experiment, and hence there were constraints while the study was being conducted because the norm violation acts had to be mild like closing the windows rather than breaking the traffic light. For our study, the norm violation acts will also be mild but we will try our best to include major norm violation acts in the scenarios in the questionnaires.

A different study showed that higher levels of perceived power led to greater rewards for that particular individual. Powerful individuals were given more freedom and liberties than low-power individuals who, in comparison, faced social constraints and more punishments (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Power individuals are also less prone to analyze other people's emotions, accept their point of view or see from their perspective (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfel, 2006). It was theorized that power has the ability to change a person's attitude by putting him in a position where he has to reach the certain benchmark required of an individual of his status, i.e. non-compliance with rules, disregard for other's emotions or ideas.

A study showed that power certainly restricts others, and those who possess power are said to be free from the effects of external forces (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). Another distinction they make is between dispositional and situational factors. Acts performed by power holders were perceived as motivated by disposition, and those performed by the powerless were said to be situational driven.

A different study by Anderson et al. showed that personal sense of power clearly exists in the social settings (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012). For instance, those who felt they could get their way in a group also assumed that they can control the attitudes and thoughts of the people belonging to that same group. Similarly, this sense of power was also observed in relationships which showed variation

from one relationship to the other, i.e. personal sense of power was distinct but moderate when concerned their friends but considerably different with their parents.

The subject of what makes individuals rise to power has since quite a while ago amazed social researchers. In this particular research Van Kleef et al. analyzed the novel theory that power is associated with people who show prosocial standard infringement i.e., breaking rules for the advantage of others by opening the window or taking the experimenters coffee and offering it to the other participants (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Blaker, & Heerdinkan, 2012).

A study in 2009 revealed that power and dominance can be subject to gender. In the study, females who interrupted were perceived as more dominant than the males, showing that gender plays a role in how individuals are perceived in terms of power (Youngquist, 2009). A step further was taken when another research investigated the effects of anger and sadness on the perception of others. The participants awarded more value to those who were disposed to showing anger as opposed to sadness about certain situations (Tiedens, 2001). This is related to power in ways that when we think of those as powerful, we automatically assume that those people are less predisposed to empathy as compared to low power individuals. Hence, the studies that were conducted proved this theory as correct.

If we delve deeper into the power dynamics of minority vs majority groups, a study was conducted by Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover to find out the effects of powerful men who stereotyped females in workplaces where they were the dominant group (Vescio, 2005). It was revealed that the men who were given devalued positions but higher praise were angrier than the females in devalued positions. In another study, the powerful cheated more while at the same time calling out others for cheating! Similarly, the judging of moral transgressions depended on the legitimacy of power (Lammers, 2010). This shows that if the power is legitimate, then it's okay to transgress morally than if the power is illegitimate. Not only this, but those holding illegitimate power was quick to judge themselves rather than judging others when morally transgressed. Those who were considered as powerful, showed that they expressed less stress in hard pressed situations and their opinions were steadfastly different than the ones expressed by the majority (Adam D. Galinsky, 2008).

In a study that was conducted 40 years ago and then replicated today, showed that 40 years ago, people were more willing to use the power they were given as managers or heads to motivate their subordinates to do the work than they were today (MacLellan, 2013). This shows the change that has taken place in the society and the fact that people nowadays believe in collaborative work and the faith they hold in their co-workers to get the work done on time.

However, some researchers carried out a study which Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, tested the relationship between power and status (Nathanael J. Fast, 2011). It was interesting to note that when the individuals had power but were in a position of low status, they tended to choose more demeaning roles for their subjects than the other way around. This shows that in order to have affective power, an individual must also have a high status either in the society or the workplace. Moreover, there is a gender difference in how people respond to status, males respond with aggression and females respond with avoidant responses (Christine L. Porath, 2008).

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between power perception and norm violation and also, how norm violation is not always perceived negatively. The managerial implications of our research will try to examine real life problems such as bullying and why bullies are given their particular social status.

4. Rationale

The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of bullying and other types of norm violating behavior which is not always perceived as negatively as we believe. The experiments are designed to test norm violation under different circumstances so to gain some insight into the bigger picture. While a lot of research has been done on this, we want to see the influence of environment and other factors by conducting the same study in the context of Karachi.

5. Research Questions

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare perception of norm violation for both actors.

5.1. Hypotheses

H₁ Norm violators are perceived as more powerful than individuals who do not exhibit norm-violating behavior.

H₀ No difference in power perception for norm violators and norm compliers.

H₂ Norm violators are expected to react more aggressively in negative situations and norm adhering individuals are expected to react with more sadness.

H₀ Norm violators will not be expected to react differently from norm adhering individuals.

5.2. Variables

For H₁, the dependent variable will be power perception while the independent variable is norm violating behavior as well as socially conforming acts.

For H₂, we will attempt to explore the emotional stereotypes associated with power. The dependent variable is power perception and the expected emotional response from the actor. The independent variable is norm violating behavior/social conformity.

6. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of bullying and other types of norm-violating behavior which is not always perceived as negatively as we believe.

7. Research Methods

For this research, we conducted two separate studies to look at different dimensions of power perception. Our research tools included only questionnaires from the original study as the original study was in Dutch and we could only get a sample of the questionnaire, and hence created our own questionnaire using the sample and the description provided in the study (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, *Breaking the Rules to Rise to Power: How Norm Violators Gain Power in the Eyes of Others*, 2011).

7.1. Study 1

7.1.1. Methodology

232 participants (114 males; majority of which lie in the age group 17-25) read a scenario about two actors, one of which violated norms and one who did not. The scenario talked about two cars on the road, one which broke the red light and sped away, and the other which waited until the traffic light turned green. Participants of this study were asked to rate both actors based on three scales.

Power perception was measured with two scales. First participants were asked to rate the actors based on adjectives describing power, for instance, decisive, powerful, strong, in control, compliant (reverse coded) and leader like ($\alpha=0.38$). The questionnaire was on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 meant the adjective described the person poorly and 7 meant the adjective described the actor very well. Another scale was used to measure norm violation perception where participants had to rate the actors on adjectives about social impressions: asocial, immoral, rude, well-mannered (reverse coded) and improper ($\alpha=0.89$). Lastly, the participants of the study indicated to which extent power statements applied to the actors ($\alpha=0.78$). (See Appendix A for the complete questionnaire)

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare perception of norm violation for both actors. Our study found that there was a significant difference in how both actors were rated. Participants rated Actor A (the norm violator who broke the red light) higher on the norm violation scale [$M=4.39$, $SD=0.87$] than Actor B (the person who waiting at the red light) [$M=3.33$, $SD=0.68$; $t(190)=9.29$, $p=.000$]. This result shows that scenario was effective and that norm violators were perceived as more powerful than those who conformed to norms.

In the graph below, we see that across all age groups, there was a significant difference between how actors A and B were perceived. We see a recurring trend where the individual who violated the norm, Actor A, is repetitively rated higher on the power perception scale as compared to Actor B who abided the norms.

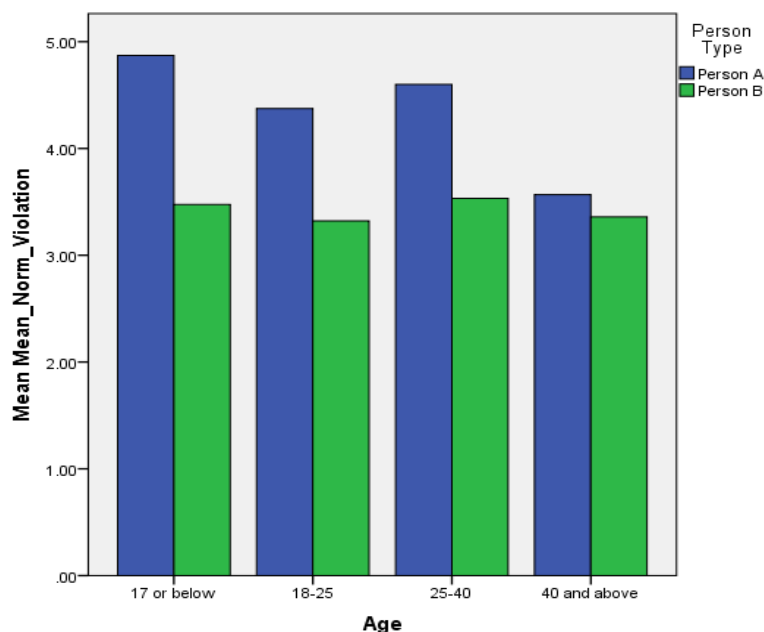


Fig. 01. ?

This proves our initial hypothesis which stated that norm violators are perceived as more powerful individuals than their norm confirming counterparts. On conducting an independent samples t-test, our study showed that the behavior of norm violators (e.g. Asocial, rude and improper) is regarded as negative, compared to individuals who comply with norms [M=5.01, SD=1.37 vs M=2.08, SD=1.15; $t(202)=16.475$, $p=0.000$]. We see that there is quite a significant difference in how these two groups are perceived (table shown below). The magnitude of the difference is a medium one ($\eta^2=0.57$).

Table 01. ?

Group Statistics

	Person Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mean_Behavior	Person A	102	5.0176	1.37822	.13646
	Person B	102	2.0804	1.15878	.11474

7.2. Study 2

In this study, we attempted to test norm violation in a different setting to test the robustness of the research. Our second hypothesis assumes that individuals who violate norms are expected to react more aggressively in situations. Here, **aggression** is defined as “overt, often harmful, social interaction with the intention of inflicting damage or other unpleasantness upon another individual” (Wikipedia, 2015). Our hypothesis assumes that :

7.2.1. Methodology

We tested our second hypothesis by showing 168 participants (83 males; majority of which lie in the age group of 18-25, SD=0.23) one of two 20 second videos. In the first video, the actor exhibited

norm violating behavior in the classroom setting. The actor was shown to be slouching in her chair, putting her feet up, eating in class, littering and when asked a question, she ignored before answering rudely. In the control video, an actor was shown abiding by all social norms. In this video, the actor was sitting properly in her chair, feet down, while she studied. When the actor of the control group was asked a question, she answered politely with a social smile. At the end of each video, water is accidentally spilt on the actor and the video ends.

The participants were given a questionnaire to fill about their perceptions regarding the video. The questionnaire was similar to the one in study 1, where participants were asked to rate the actor on the basis of power adjectives like decisive, compliant (reverse scored) and powerful ($\alpha=.59$). The second scale was used to measure power perception and participants had to rate the actor on adjectives such as asocial, well-mannered (reverse scored) and improper ($\alpha=.87$). Additionally, we also provided four power statements such as “*this individual enjoys considerable authority*” and “*this person is influential*” ($\alpha=.58$). To test our second hypothesis, we also asked participants how they expected the actor to react when water was spilled on her; in anger (furious, annoyed and irritated) ($\alpha=.89$) or in sadness (distressed, depressed or down) ($\alpha=.79$). (See Appendix B for the complete questionnaire)

7.3. Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perception of norm violation for both videos. Our study found that participants scored the actor in the norm violating condition significantly higher on the norm violation scale ($M=4.74$, $SD=0.76$) than in the control group where no norms were violated ($M=2.87$, $SD=0.8$; $t(161)=14.8$, $p<0.001$). This means that our manipulation of the two actors was successful. Participants did not perceive the norm conforming actor as very deviant, and this further provides evidence to support our first hypothesis. In the graph below, we see a drastic difference in how both actors are perceived.

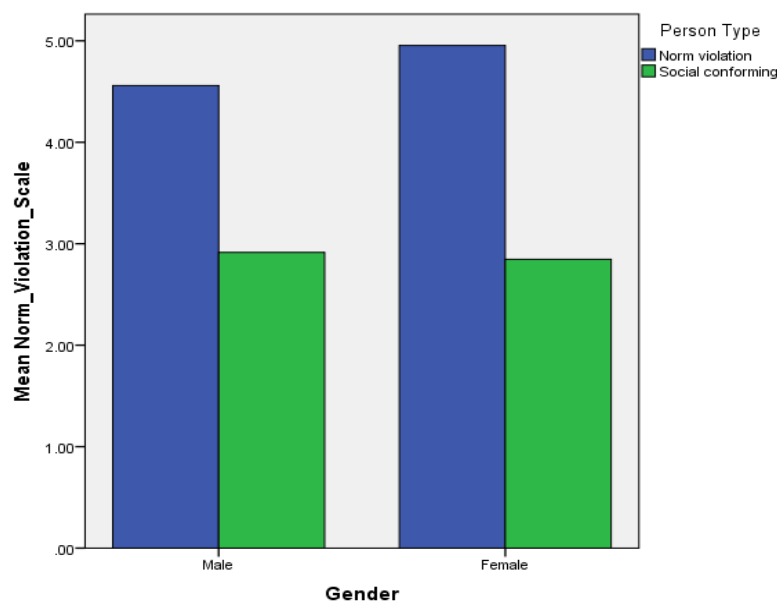


Fig. 2. ?

Another independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how exactly the two groups were perceived. We also see that norm adhering individuals are seen as more compliant ($M=5.08$, $SD=2.19$) than norm violating individuals ($M=2.49$, $SD=1.81$; $t(166)=-8.26$, $p<0.005$). However, the norm violating actor was rated as someone who would enjoy more considerable authority ($M=5.15$, $SD=1.9$) than the norm complier ($M=3.49$, $SD=1.68$; $t(164)=5.67$, $p<0.005$). The data shows that we associate power with those that are willing to break rules, a statement that is also supported by the previous literature.

We see that norm violators are seen as more powerful individuals. The survey results showed that participants of the norm violation condition expected the actor to react with more anger when water was dropped on her ($M=5.61$, $SD=1.29$) as compared to the control group ($M=3.12$, $SD=1.81$; $t(161)=10.22$, $p<0.005$). In contrast, participants said that the socially conforming actor would react with more sadness when water was dropped on her ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.75$) as compared to the norm violating actor ($M=2.71$, $SD=1.54$; $t(159)=-0.64$, $p>0.5$).

7.4. Discussion

Through this study, we aimed to prove two hypotheses. Firstly, that norm violators are perceived as more powerful individuals as compared to their rule abiding counterparts. And secondly, to prove how rule breakers are associated with aggression and influence. Through the results, we see that both hypotheses stand proven.

The experiment conducted in this research project was motivated by the question: *Is norm violation perceived to be powerful*. The results presented in this paper somewhat converge with previous studies demonstrating that not only is there a relationship between power perception and norm violation, but also that Norm violators were perceived to be powerful than individuals who did not exhibit norm violating behavior.

Since this is a widely researched subject, we contributed to this growing literature by testing factors that affected how power is perceived by observing the behavior of norm violators. Our original study 'Breaking the Rules to Rise to Power' suggested that 'Violating a norm implies that one has the power to act according to one's own volition in spite of situational constraints, which fuels perceptions of power (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, **Breaking the Rules to Rise to Power: How Norm Violators Gain Power in the Eyes of Others, 2011**). And for that matter they carried out four studies to prove this. Where individuals who violated power were perceived as more powerful than individuals who did not show such behaviors. We thus used the original study as a yard stick to conduct our research limiting it to IBA and thus predicting the same outcomes as to that of the original study. The present results are thus consistent with the predictions that were made. We did indeed find a relationship between power perception and norm violation.

It is important to point out that we used questionnaires in order to understand how the participants understood norm violation to be. Our research tools only included questionnaires from our original study. Before giving out the questionnaire, the participants were provided with a scenario, either, a situation was described where one actor-displayed norm violating behavior or it showed that the other complied with social norms. Based on these two scenarios, the participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires. The first scenario described a traffic intersection where all the cars were waiting for the signal to turn green to

go and one car broke the traffic rule and did not stop at the red light and went ahead. The second scenario also described traffic intersections where all the cars waited patiently for the red light to turn green in order to proceed, where everyone abides by the rules.

These two scenarios were described before giving out the questionnaires, we believed that since breaking of traffic lights and violating traffic norms is so common in Pakistan the results would be more biased towards how it was somewhat okay to break the traffic light or so much so, that anyone who broke the traffic light wouldn't be viewed as someone who did something extra ordinary as it as mundane as biding by the traffic light. For that matter we made sure that we didn't just limit our age bracket to college students at IBA, which is why we conducted the following questionnaire online as well where the results showed a series of responses.

After the surveys were compiled, the results were analyzed which gave a rather positive result. The results showed that the P value was less than 0.05 making the hypothesis significant. Hence proving our hypothesis to be true, since majority of the questionnaires, even after taking into account the traffic situation of Pakistan showed a rather positive response, where norm violators were perceived to be powerful. The reason for this is still may vary from person to person, which is why the general reason is still uncertain and are not discussed in this paper as they are beyond the scope of the current research project but the results illustrates that our research and the original case study have found common ground and that the hypothesis is accepted.

7.5. Managerial Implications

The results for this study can be used to understand how people perceive social statuses in terms of advertising and the consumption of brands. Individuals who are perceived as powerful are usually positively correlated to status and hence will use the brands that are expensive and more widely known than the less common brands. Not only this, but also the results of this study can be applied to bullying, that in everyday lives, bullies are considered to be powerful and the other children are afraid of them and usually steer clear. This not only happens in playgrounds but also in work places. The playground example shows that such instances start from a very young age and continue till adulthood.

These results apply heavily to our society because in our society, powerful people are given extra importance. Not powerful people, but those who are perceived as powerful. For example, if we see someone driving a jeep, we automatically assume that that person must be someone of importance and hence we just nod and accept his behaviors such as breaking traffic lights. This type of behavior should be condoned rather than accepted, because we need to realize what is wrong and right in our culture. This is why our society is the way it is right now.

7.6. Limitations/Delimitations

Our study will be conducted in the Karachi context. We will incorporate questionnaires, videos and a laboratory experiment in our research. Some of the problems that will arise are as follows;

1. We understand that individuals perceive norm violators as powerful but we cannot establish the causal link. We recognize that this will be a delimitation of our study.

2. The sample in our laboratory experiment will only consist of IBA students, with a sample of approximately 50 students because the facilities will not be available to us for a long period of time due to time constraints. To solve this difficulty, we will book the rooms' weeks in advance to make sure our study will be uninterrupted.
3. Our sample consists of individuals in the age bracket of 18 to 24 so our data will not be reflective of the entire population. We can focus on what university students perceive as powerful as power dynamics do play a role in a university going student's life.
4. Willing participants might find it tedious to watch the videos and then answer a questionnaire. To overcome this problem, we will verify the results and check for reliability.

7.7. Recommendations for Future Research

We can further explore the kind of behavior the people who perceived the norm violators as powerful exhibit after such surveys. Also, the studies that we conducted showed minor displays of norm violation, we need to see what the perceptions are after real instances rather than just imagining them. It is also theorized that norm violators are thought of as more powerful when they acted in the interest of everyone rather than their own selves. There needs to be an extensive amount of research to prove this, but the thing is, we need actual field experiments for this rather than just imagined scenarios. Because people's responses are different when they actually experience or watch from their own eyes rather than think about what could have been.

8. Findings

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perception of norm violation for both videos. Our study found that participants scored the actor in the norm violating condition significantly higher on the norm violation scale ($M=4.74$, $SD=0.76$) than in the control group where no norms were violated ($M=2.87$, $SD=0.8$; $t(161)=14.8$, $p<0.001$).

9. Conclusion

Previous studies have not only shown the link between power and gender but also how people achieve greater rewards due to power perceptions. Power is important to each individual; if a person in a society goes against the norm, they are considered to be powerful. The research not only studied the correlation between norm violation and power perception, but also confirmed negative correlation between power and status with the help of different regression tests. Scenarios based questionnaires provided bias-free results helping us prove the hypothesis right.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: Study 1

Red Light Red Light What Do You Say?

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female

2. Age: _____

3. Please read the following scenario and answer the following questions:

Imagine you are at an intersection during rush hour. One person (Person A), in a silver Corolla, breaks the traffic light, and speeds away in a hurry. Another person (Person B), also in a silver Corolla, waits till the light turns green and then passes through.

On a scale of 1 to 7, where;

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe person at all			Moderately describes person			Describes person very well

Rate Person A and Person B accordingly to these adjectives

	Person A	Person B
Decisive		
Powerless		
Strong		
Compliant		
In control		
Leader like		

4. How do you perceive Person A and Person B's behavior? Use the scale provided

	Person A	Person B
Asocial		
Immoral		
Improper		
Rude		
Well-mannered		

5. Indicate to what extent these statements apply to the actor. Use the scale provided

	Person A	Person B
This person is influential		
This person has a leadership position		
This person is in charge of subordinates		
This person enjoys considerable authority		

Appendix B

Questionnaire: Study 2

Do you know your P's and Q's?

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
2. Age: ____
3. Rate the following after watching the video

On a scale of 1 to 7, where;

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not describe person at all			Moderately describes person			Describes person very well

Rate Person X accordingly to these adjectives

Decisive	
Powerful	
Strong	
Compliant	
In control	
Leader like	

4. How do you perceive Person X's behavior? Use the scale provided.

Asocial	
Immoral	
Improper	
Rude	
Well-mannered	

Indicate to what extent these statements apply to the actor. Use the scale provided

This person is influential	
This person has a leadership position	
This person is in charge of subordinates	
This person enjoys considerable authority	

5. How do you expect the actor to react when the water is spilled on him? Use the scale provided.

Furious	
Annoyed	
Irritated	
Distressed	
Depressed	
Down	