

How Physical Pain Influences Conformity

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of aversive bodily states, particularly physical pain, on consumer behavior, extending beyond the visceral domain into unrelated contexts. Building on the threat-signaling quality of pain and its evolutionary role in promoting self-protection, the study suggests that the desire for safety in numbers, observed in social animals, may also manifest in humans experiencing pain. The project posits that physical pain may increase individuals' likelihood of conforming—altering behavior to align with others—as an unconscious mechanism for seeking safety and self-protection. Across four studies, including field, online, and lab data, the authors empirically show that experiencing physical pain increases the likelihood of conforming.

Subject Areas: *Attitude, Consumer Behaviour*

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