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Article Critique #2

**Summary of Article**

1. Problem/Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine which factors influence the process of persuasion/causing an attitude change, and which of 2 routes are more important in certain situations. The first route is the central route, in which a person will change their attitude after consideration of the arguments. The second route is the peripheral route, in which an attitude change is due to outside factors such as credibility. This study is important because it combines ideas from previous studies and uses that to build an experiment that accurately assesses persuasion. The study is useful in further developing the knowledge on what is already known about attitude change.
2. Key Hypotheses: The hypotheses for this study are that when the topic that a person was being persuaded on has high personal relevance to them, the attitude change would depend more on the central route of persuasion, in which there will be a bigger emphasis on arguments themselves. When the topic has a low personal relevance, then the peripheral features related to the persuasion will be more relevant to the attitude change, such as the credibility or number of arguments. Several previous research is mentioned throughout the paper, such as Eagly (1974), McQuire (1968), Petty and Cacioppo (1981), Maddux and Rogers (1980), and Johnson and Scileppi (1969) among many others.
3. Sample: The sample consists of 145 male and female undergraduate students from the University of Missouri, who were in an introductory psychology course. This sample is not the most generalizable, as it includes only a certain age group as well as a demographic pursuing higher education. Additionally, the sample only consists of people living in the US, so it may not portray the views of people from other countries.
4. Measures and Procedures: The independent variables consisted of several factors. The student’s personal involvements with what was being presented, in this case a taped report on certain policy changes that may happen in their university. The tapes were of the same male speaker arguing for the creation of comprehensive exams seniors would need to take to get their degree. Personal involvement was decided based on which tape the student heard, one version stating this policy change would be put into place the next year (therefore they would be affected, making this group of students the high involvement group) or in 10 years (meaning they wouldn’t be affected, making them the low involvement group). Another independent variable was source expertise, in which both groups listened to either a tape from a source of low expertise (a class from a high school) or high expertise (a professor of education). The final independent variable was the quality of the argument, in which both groups listened to either an argument of high quality (with the use of persuasive statistics and data) or low quality (using personal opinions and examples).

The dependent variables were measured in different ways. First, there personal views on the subject before listening to the recordings were measured. This was done using two measures of attitudes, one being to rate the idea of “Comprehensive Exams” on 4 scales (good/bad, foolish/wise, etc.) and the other an 11-point scale to measure how much they agree with seniors taking a comprehensive final exam. Following them listening to the recordings, they were asked three questions to determine how effective the manipulations were. Additionally, they were made to list out the arguments they remembered from what was presented in the tape they listened to, which were then determined to be accurate or not.

The procedure for the experiment was that the students were split into groups of 3 to 16. They were put in separate cubicles in which they were unable to communicate or be affected by the other participants. They listened to the tape with headphones and were told the chancellor of their university was seeking recommendations for the changes in the policy that would come to pass. After listening to the tape, they filled out the booklet to determine how much their attitude toward the subject changed.

1. Results: The results produced from this experiment were consistent with what was hypothesized to happen. The researchers found that when the persuasive argument listened to was relevant and would directly affect the student, the actual argument and what information was presented had more relevance than peripheral factors like the expertise of the person presenting the argument. The opposite was found to be true for students in the low involvement group, because what was being argued was less important to them, there was higher importance placed on the expertise of the speaker than if the argument being presented was good or not.
2. Practical Application: The results of this study offer an important view into how the process of persuasion happens, and what may be considered more persuasiveness in certain situations. It was found that those in higher involvements groups looked for evidence to back up an argument, and those in lower involvement groups were more easily convinced by the less relevant factors related to the argument itself. These results can be useful in understanding certain social phenomenon in several aspects of life.

**Personal Reaction**

I believe this study presented interesting ideas and make relevant conclusions in relation to persuasion. The detailed processes that go into persuading a person provides interesting insights on how attitude changes may happen. Personally, I can see how the results make sense in the real world and can associate certain behaviors I’ve witnessed to that. If I were to redo this experiment, I would make sure to include a wider age range, in order to determine how and if these types of factors remain accurate later in life. I have cautions due to the very narrow sample group used, because I feel it doesn’t provide the most complete view of the subject.

It is useful to understand how the persuasion and attitude changes go about in happening, because of how much of everyday life is spent interacting with others and being influenced by them. The results in this study may be able to offer an explanation on adolescent behavior during high school, especially how peer pressure and the influence of the environment may cause a change in how a person acts due to the need to fit in. This study has offered a thought-provoking view that I feel may open the doors to even more answers and explanations in relation to this topic.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Would a difference in culture and traditions, for example a person of a different nationality or who has grown up in another country, change something in the results?
2. Since this study is not recent, could there be newly developed hypotheses and ideas that are also backed up by research?