

# Examples of Less-leads-to-more Effect

PSYCHOLOGY III

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Section - 'A'



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## ASSIGNMENT

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Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that it will be easier to change individual's behaviours by offering them *just enough required* reward to engage in attitude-conflicting behaviour. The term, "Less-leads-to-more" effect was first coined by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959). The theory also predicts that dissonance will be higher when we have fewer reasons to engage in attitude-discrepant behaviour.

### Definition

Less-leads-to-more effect is the socio-psychological fact that when individuals are offered small rewards for engaging in counter-attitudinal behaviour, dissonance produced and thus attitude change, is much higher than when offered with higher rewards.

## Examples

Some real life examples of this effect are following,

1. **Supari Killers.** Supari killing is a profession that thrives on paid murders. Almost all of them know and realise that it is wrong, illegal and immoral to murder someone. But, they still do it because of the high payments they get. Had the payment money be really small, these killers might have thought that it's wrong to do so. But eventually because of the payment, they accept to do so. Their *attitude* of not

taking someone's life is undermined by their *behaviour* due to the payment they get. If the payment would have been less, they would have higher dissonance - whether to kill someone or not.

2. **Hypothetical Scenario.** Say, there happens to be a corrupt invigilator. (S)he offers a student to share questions worth five points for an upcoming test if (s)he babysits his/her toddler. In this case, the *attitude* of the student is that (s)he shouldn't cheat and (s)he has great dissonance whether to do it or not, and eventually refuses (*behaviour*). But, what if the invigilator offered questions worth complete 100 points? Theory says that it's likely that the student will have lesser dissonance and might accept. (S)he still believes that it's immoral and illegal to cheat but would now have *stronger justification* for his/her actions.
3. **Ben Franklin's Example.** Ben Franklin is popularly known as one of the founding fathers of USA. In one of the anecdotes, it goes that a particular guy, say Jack, had bad relations with him (*attitude* and *behaviour*). So, one day, Ben Franklin asked to bring him a book in library, which he delivered him. Later, instead of having rebuff over the previous incident, he had a friendly conversation with Ben Franklin. This is a case of dissonance - between his attitude and behaviour - that occurred with Jack. However, if Ben Franklin would have directly asked him a big favour, say to book his ferry tickets, this would have much lower dissonance and Jack would have directly rejected the help asked. And thus smaller the request, more the dissonance.
4. **Students' Dilemma.** Students when watch their favourite TV series, they occasionally experience cognitive dissonance that they should study. Consider an example, tomorrow is a student's exam and he hasn't studied a particular chapter well (which would take him about half an hour to prepare). He, however, decides to watch another soap of about half an hour. This would result in much greater dissonance than if he had almost all his part unprepared and needed more than six hours of preparation.

## References

Festinger, L. and Carlsmith, J. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*.