Is it OK to apply operant conditioning in Academic Institution: 
Assumption based on Observation

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Abstract

This paper is about the application of operant conditioning in academic institution. It is about a case history in which the case narrative person gave some form of her work in the first institution as well as the second institution. The investigator inferred from the case narrative person’s information about the possibility of applying operant conditioning in the academic institution. In this paper the investigator designated in-group and out-group in the first institution as well as in-group and out-group in the second institution and they are interrelated to each other about their respective goal to achieve. Trying to achieve the goal means they (in-group vs. out-group) have to perform some form of suppression task towards the neutral person (here the case narrative person). The investigator shared that while doing such suppression task by in-group and out-group to get their respective goal, the case narrative person have to keep quite without defending anything whatever they do but case narrative person needs to observe very carefully about their strategies to the suppression task. Here the investigator also added like-minded people for both in-group and out-group people. So the main objective of this paper with regard to neutral person as assumed by the investigator is i.e., **to suppress the career of the neutral person in any cost so that she or she could not able to come up in the power position. Or More you (in-group and out-group) can criticise or show defamation in front of the whole Institution better, you, all get the benefit (i.e., verbal praise or pay increase or project or promotion).** Such ideas has to be implemented by the in-group and out-group giving rewards to them if they can bring success in this ideas. Here the rewards in the form of projects, promotion, any giving any responsible power job etc. punishment comes in the form of criticizing to in-group and out-group for failing such ideas. Such scenario the investigator wants to depict it in the learning process especially based on operant conditioning. Operant conditioning (or instrumental conditioning) is a form of learning in which an individual's behaviour is modified by its consequences; the behaviour may change in form, frequency, or strength. Operant conditioning is a term that was coined by B.F. Skinner in 1937. The investigator assumes monitoring behaviour of the in-group and out-group on the basis of bullying attitude toward the neutral person. on the same level the investigator assumes ‘reinforce desired behaviour’ on the basis on rewards like praising, giving promotion, giving projects etc. to the in-group or out-group whoever perform well. The investigator assumes one condition also, if they, ingroup or group could not bring success on such idea, and then reduce incentives to perform undesirable behaviour. Now the investigator asks, “Is it possible to apply such things in the academic Institution?”

Key words: 
Operant conditioning; Neutral person; In-group vs. out-group ; like-minded people; bullying; suppression task.

Operant conditioning (or instrumental conditioning) is a form of learning in which an individual's behaviour is modified by its consequences; the behaviour may change in form, frequency, or strength. Operant conditioning is a term that was coined by B.F. Skinner in 1937. Operant behaviour operates on the environment and is maintained by its consequences. Researchers like J.E.R. Staddon and D.T. Cerutti study that Operant behaviour is behaviour “controlled” by its consequences. In practice, operant conditioning is the study of reversible behaviour maintained by reinforcement schedules. They review empirical studies and theoretical approaches to two large
classes of operant behaviour: interval timing and choice. They discuss cognitive versus behavioural approaches to timing, the “gap” experiment and its implications, proportional timing and Weber's law, temporal dynamics and linear waiting, and the problem of simple chain-interval schedules. They review the long history of research on operant choice: the matching law, its extensions and problems, concurrent chain schedules, and self-control. They point out how linear waiting may be involved in timing, choice, and reinforcement schedules generally. There are prospects for a unified approach to all these areas.

Reinforcement and punishment, the core tools of operant conditioning, are either positive (delivered following a response), or negative (withdrawn following a response). This creates a total of four basic consequences, with the addition of a fifth procedure known as extinction (i.e. no change in consequences following a response).

Naturally occurring consequences can also be said to reinforce, punish, or extinguish behaviour and are not always delivered by people.

- **Reinforcement** is a consequence that causes behaviour to occur with greater frequency.
- **Punishment** is a consequence that causes behaviour to occur with less frequency.
- **Extinction** is caused by the lack of any consequence following behaviour. When a behaviour is inconsequential (i.e., producing neither favourable nor unfavourable consequences) it will occur less frequently. When a previously reinforced behaviour is no longer reinforced with either positive or negative reinforcement, it leads to a decline in that behaviour.

### Four contexts of operant conditioning:

The four procedures are:

1. **Positive reinforcement** (Reinforcement): occurs when a behaviour (response) is followed by a stimulus that is appetitive or rewarding, increasing the frequency of that behaviour. In the Skinner box experiment, a stimulus such as food or sugar solution can be delivered when the rat engages in target behaviour, such as pressing a lever.

2. **Negative reinforcement** (Escape): occurs when behaviour (response) is followed by the removal of an aversive stimulus, thereby increasing that behaviour’s frequency. In the Skinner box experiment, negative reinforcement can be a loud noise continuously sounding inside the rat's cage until it engages in the target behaviour, such as pressing a lever, upon which the loud noise is removed.

3. **Positive punishment** (Punishment) (also called "Punishment by contingent stimulation"): occurs when behaviour (response) is followed by a stimulus, such as introducing a shock or loud noise, resulting in a decrease in that behaviour.

4. **Negative punishment** (Penalty) (also called "Punishment by contingent withdrawal"): occurs when a behaviour (response) is followed by the removal of a stimulus, such as taking away a child's toy following an undesired behaviour, resulting in a decrease in that behaviour.

Other researchers like David S. Touretzky and Lisa M. Saksida narrate that Instrumental (or operant) conditioning, a form of animal learning, is similar to reinforcement learning (Watkins, 1989) in that it allows an agent to adapt its actions to gain maximally from the environment while being rewarded only for correct performance. However, animals learn much more complicated behaviours through instrumental conditioning than robots presently acquire through reinforcement learning. They describe a new computational model of the conditioning process that attempts to capture some of the aspects that are missing from simple reinforcement learning: conditioned reinforcers, shifting reinforcement contingencies, explicit action sequencing, and state space refinement. They apply their model to a task commonly used to study working memory in rats and monkeys—the delayed match-to-sample task. Animals learn this task in stages. In simulation, our model also acquires the task in stages, in a similar manner. They have used the model to train an RWI B21 robot.

### Objective of the study:

To suppress the career of the neutral person in any cost so that she or she could not able to come up in the power position. Or
More you (in-group and out-group) can criticise or show defamation in front of the whole Institution better, you, all get the benefit (i.e., verbal praise or pay increase or project or promotion).”

Methods:

Participant:
A case narrative person (neutral person); here the duty of neutral person is just to observe whatever going on and use the strategies like let it be and kept quite. Neutral person is a person who never forms groups but working together with the in-group and out-group. In-group vs. Out-group along with like-minded people. Age from 29 to 60 yrs.

Instrument:
Naturalistic Observation:
The aim of Naturalistic observation is to study behaviour in its usual setting, without asking any questions or administering any tests. The investigator simply observes and records what happens in the natural environment. While naturalistic observation is often used in the study of animal behaviour, it is sometimes applied to human beings as well—especially to behaviour in public places such as airports, shopping malls, and hotel lobbies (e.g., Hall and Veccia, 1991). Who touches whom in such locations? How do people use gestures? Information on these and many other forms of behaviour can often be obtained from naturalistic observation.

Case studies: Generalizing from the unique
Every human being is unique; each of us possesses a distinctive combination of traits, abilities, and characteristic. Given this fact, is it possible to learn anything about human behaviour from detailed study of one individual or perhaps a few persons? Several famous psychologists have suggested that it is. They have adopted the “case method,” in which detailed information is gathered on specific individuals. The researchers then use this information to formulate principles or reach conclusion that presumably, apply to large number of persons—perhaps to all human being. By far the most famous practitioner of the case method was Sigmund Freud, who used a small number of cases as the basis for his famous theories of personality and mental illness.

Procedure:
State Goal: “to suppress the career of the neutral person so that he or she could not able to come up under the promotion”
Monitor Behaviour: Criticizing and Bullying attitude towards the neutral person by the in-group and out-group people in larger context;
Reinforce desired behaviour: For their success work in the phase manner, rewards like verbal praise or pay increase or project or promotion are given from different angle.
Reduce incentives to perform undesirable behaviour: Removing the rewards as described above for not performing their work well. So the investigator assumes bullying strategies from the in-group and out-group people.
Bullying can be taken place in many forms. It is something unwanted things or words or statement delivered by group of person to another person or their group members or a power person wants to suppress someone for any reasons (here for their rewards like verbal praise or pay increase or projects or promotion etc).
How does bullying takes place?
Bullying can take place at workplace, administration, educational settings, and corporate sector and so on.
So trying to gain their positive reinforcement, they may use the following strategies:
1. Following rumours as given by the earlier in-group and out-group to the present in-group and out-group people about the neutral person;
2. Group Influences;
3. Trying to bring issue in larger context;
4. Trying to associate neutral’s career to another context;
5. Not to inform relevant academic on time;
6. Role of ethnic
Results:
Condition 1:
If the in-group is successful in criticising neutral person’s career or keep him/her in tense environment so that others can talk him/her in the academic institution, then in-group and out-group can be rewarded for projects, promotion etc.
Hidden logic, Here the investigator may assumes that they also may involve about the inside plan of the earlier institution people. So maximum criticism so that the neutral could not able to go back to the earlier Institution. Then present in-group and out-group may lose all the rewards as their plan which is beyond the neutral person’s understanding level but infer from observation at the latter stage not accepting to implement promotion after touching the criteria.
(note: Neutral person never think to go back once she/he left but if any wrong things was done in his/her name due to circumstances without informing him/her and latter she/he knew, he/she wants to rectify otherwise such things was/ is imitated by the short span people/opportunistic people who lacks ethics of working/lack of work culture people/easily instigated by the external people without knowing anything etc. such people who do not have long-term plan but enjoy to their short-term goals.
Condition.2:
Criticism makes neutral person that do not possible to go back to the earlier institution if the in-group and out-group can implement such conditions; they are given rewards in the form of projects, promotion, power level etc.
Hidden logic: That is why they use their own ethnic people to give a wrong message and associated advantages of criticising the neutral person on such grounds.
Due to such positive reinforcement behind the suppression of the neutral person, they (in-group and out-group started playing bullying attitude that can be observed from 2007 to 2010 and 2010 to 2013 (July).
Discussion (analysis of observation):
The main objective of this paper is :
“To suppress the neutral person so that he or she could not able to be promoted”.

or

“More suppress the neutral person, more reward to in-group or out-group people in the form of verbal praise or pay increase or projects, promotion etc”.
Why such unclear circumstances to the neutral person?
“Neutral person may work in earlier institution in which he/she may be terminated due to their in-group and out-group’s conditioning plan to get their own people post over there. When the neutral person got job in another institution, their prestige and pride may be shattered. So trying to defend their pride and prestige, they (in-group and out-group in earlier institution) may start playing some forms of tactics so that neutral person may be shown unfit in the second job also. So they (earlier in-group or out-group) may pour rewards to the in-group and out-group people (in the second institution) so that they may bring suppression in the neutral person’s career. But such things may not aware to the neutral person in the initial stage.”
So the investigator put one idea over here, “to suppress the career of the neutral person in any cost so that he/she could not able to come up in the power position.”
If, in case, neutral person comes up in the power position, it means that at last their rewards are useless to perform such ideas.
Such observation may be based on event sampling; and noted it down the moment they (in-group and out-group) got such projects, promotions, power position etc. Here the investigator assumes the time period from 2007- till 2013 July).
Now let’s turn their operation process how to implement such ideas.
Their operation process may go like that:
Let’s take any example, say p department, there are in-group and out-group and they do their work beyond their department p. They try to spread a message to their group members of other department about the neutral person; such message may go to the higher authority; higher authority has the full power to take judge whatever they listened from such group members about the neutral person; so at
the initial stage higher authority also may assume about the message given by the in-group from the p department and in the same way when the out-group people got the chance to do such activity to the neutral person. It means that any form of message about the neutral person comes from the P department itself before going to the other department members. It clearly indicates that neutral person’s career is going to be targeted. But In-group and out-group may want to bring a tense environment about neutral person arousing to their group members in the larger context. So such messages of any form of criticism i.e., positive or negative about the neutral person may be given by the in-group and out-group from the P department to other department members of their group cluster and administration level of their cluster group, then others also may start assuming such messages about the neutral person. But other people may know the logic behind p’s department’s in-group and out-group role on this matter.

Here the logic as the investigator depicted, “to get more rewards/opportunity to do such things (to suppress the career of the neutral person so that he/she could not come up in the power position) by in-group and out-group.

Who gave those opportunities to the in-group and out-group for doing such act?

To give such answer, the investigator goes to another layer that was already happened to the neutral person. now let’s turn on such past incident.

“Neutral person was removed from one institution where she/he worked over there under the tense atmosphere of the in-group and out-group conflictual scenario. In the earlier institution in-group and out-group want their own people over there for such things they need to remove the neutral person otherwise they could not bring success in their conditional plan of getting their own people over there. so they do but one group did not get their candidate over their after having been removed the neutral person due to third person role over there. Those who already removed neutral person may feel angry to get neutral person in another institution’s p department. So they may start doing one deal to the p’s department in-group people initially and later followed by out-group people in the p’s department. Each individual want opportunity that make help him/her to do some form of progress work in his/her career or in their group level. The deal is as investigator sorted out in the earlier, “if you (ingroup,initially) and Out-group (latter after imitation take place from in-group) can able to suppress neutral person’s career and able to show as unfit, you, in-group and out-group will be given rewards in the form of projects, promotion,etc.”

Trying to fulfil such criteria, they may start doing some form of imitation learning of those people who did it in earlier institution.

Here the investigator assumes to bring the role of students in which how the in-group and out-group play them to off and on to the neutral person. Here the investigator assumes depicting about one ethnic group who may be very highly sentiment about their feeling of the same group. If their same member of the group says something they may accept it in a manner that each and everything are right but actually their members may be using defence mechanism to ward off their anxiety ego from the larger context and projecting such things to the neutral person.

The investigator assumes that they start playing monitoring strategies:

1. The moment when the neutral is going to give promotion;
2. The moment when the neutral is appreciated by the outside people i.e., beyond the department;
3. The moment when the neutral is going to attend some form of conferences or workshops;
4. The moment when the neutral is going to get invitation for resource person.
5. The moment when the neutral person want to suppress academically.

Their Monitoring Strategies are:

1. Does not have the publication or showing to others that the neutral never inform that she/ he has the publication (even though neutral have shown many times in her/his curriculum vitae);
2. Making committee inside the department and he/she is going to screen it out from going to the administration; while doing so, wrong information may go because neutral person already submit it but never inform him/her about the screening
3. Adding some more new work in the teaching line but welcome by the neutral person;
4. The role of same ethnic groups by in-group and out-group toward their students; such things are quite visible at the time of practical;
5. Trying to keep an issue to the neutral person and one of the groups either in-group or out-group trying to fight it; but neutral person kept quite without taking any help from them and think that it is the best way to handle it;
6. Sometimes keeping letter and give it after the time was over; and playing behind such content of the letter.
7. In-group and out-group try to search any opportunity arising from such act;
8. Head of department does not know about her/his role while holding the office; so she/he started acting group wise way; then many errors come out in the structure level of the office.

In the administration side also,(in an academic institution), what happens?
Neutral person need to take either of the groups i.e., in-group or out-group. When neutral person starts more closer to in-group people, then out-group people started doing very funny things like banning something in office;
For example as the investigator mentioned, in-group people are also in the administration side also; in the same way out-group people also in the administration. So any form of letter will go from dept to through this administration people. Now out-group is observing not to go neutral letter; then their group members started functioning in a wrong way what their group members said. It means complete failure of other responsibility of their duty. Such things are quite visible. And such thing makes the neutral person’s observation very funny atmosphere.

Suggestion:
The investigator assumes that each and every office people in the administration need to know about their responsibility as well as their duty very well before joining the office. They need to be trained how to proceed the work in the administration otherwise those who does not want such things are most vulnerable condition because they want to do things in an honest and sincere way. Such things could not be observed in the administration setting.

Conclusion:
In an academic institution, the investigator assumes that it consists of different schools and inside the school many departments are included. When group formation takes place, in-group or out-group consist of people from different departments teaching and non teaching faculty members as well as from the administration side also within the academic institution. When they make form they have to give support each other without investigating what their group members are saying. So while making group on the basis of in-group and out-group, they may consist of different teaching faculty members and nonteaching faculty members. Such in-group and out-group spread their branches from their respective department to different department members along with administration section.
The investigator assumes that such in-group and out-group are quite visible in an academic Institution. Here neutral group are those groups who have not become a part of in-group and out-group and they never form group also. They are the observer of the in-group and out-group people way of monitoring strategies in the academic institution. The neutral group should not speak out when getting negative reinforcement but she/he needs to observe what the motive behind that is. so the role of neutral person is to keep quite and let it be strategies, observe silently in day to day happening in his/her department, how does other department member influences when some arousing circumstances come up. He/she also need to observe why her/his promotion does not take place.
In the application on this present study, in-group and out-group allow to operate neutral person in the environment where positive reinforcement is associated with the in-group or out-group people but for neutral person is associated with negative consequences. (like criticising unable to get promotion in his/her career) in the initial stage and neutral person never knew it.
So in this study of application of operant in academic institution, In-group and out-group are given positive reinforcement like verbal praise or pay increase or projects or promotion if they can able to operate neutral person in negative reinforcement like criticising, n doing bullying attitude to him/her.
In this study, Punishment= criticising or bullying or blocking any form of performance that reduces the neutral person’s behaviour to attend workshop, seminar etc to some extent.

Reinforcement= verbal praise or pay increase or projects or promotions for giving punishment to the neutral person.

Extinction= even though they (in-group or out-group) give punishment to neutral person, their behaviour is no longer reinforced with either positive or negative reinforcement, it leads to extinct.

In this study, if the in-group and out-group have not reinforced by such things of praise or pay increase or projects, or promotions, their bullying attitude to the neutral person will be reduced. On the another hand, if the neutral person never think about whatever going on and keep observing and writing it down in an assertive manner and publish it in an acceptable way, then so attitude from the in-group and out-group people will be reduced.

Positive reinforcement in this study, investigator kept such condition:
Stimulus such as verbal praise or pay increase or project or promotion can be delivered when the in-group and out-group engages in a target behaviour i.e., neutral person, such as criticising or bullying attitude to suppress his/her career so that she/he could not come under the promotion.

Negative reinforcement in this study, in-group and out-group ‘s attitude of criticising or bullying towards the neutral person until the neutral person engages in the target behaviour, such as responses to them, then removes the bullying or criticism.

Positive punishment occurs in this study, when the neutral person is followed by another stimulus, say criticising or bullying from another side, resulting decrease to give response behaviour.

Negative reinforcement in this present study means removing the stimulus such as verbal praise or pay increase etc. resulting in a decrease in criticising or bullying to the in-group and out-group towards the neutral person.

From the above study, the investigator has concluded that operation conditioning is quite applicable in our academic institution. Trying to do such study, the investigator assumes the main objective as follows: “to suppress the neutral person so that he or she could not able to get power position.” While trying to apply in day to day life, rewards and punishment are given. While doing so, someone's attitude or behaviour can be modified giving some form of rewards. So in the investigator’s thinking we need to apply such things in our day to day life so that we can rectify those wrong attitudes in our day to day life. In group in workplace means having a group norms n consisting of different community structure or same community structure n their group has been branched out to their society level (informal side).

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