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Dance Trend Social Experiment

Introduction

In our study, we are exploring the idea of mob mentality. We want to show how a new trend can rapidly spread through the internet due to the human nature of adapting behaviors from others. Humans have a weakness for imitating one another's behavior, and this helps explain how one's decisions can easily be affected by others (Polito). Our social experiment falls under the emergent-norm theory which is "the combination of like-minded individuals who share anonymity and emotions leading to overall group behavior", especially on the internet (Polito). We plan to show how mob mentality will influence individuals to follow a trend just because their peers are. In creating a new dance challenge and circulating it through social media, we will be able to observe this phenomenon. Trends such as the tide pod challenge, the ALS Ice Bucket challenge, and even something as simple as clapping show the willingness of humans to look to others on how to behave and act. These current day examples of mob mentality have intrigued us in how such challenges can become so widespread, and thus this is why we are conducting this experiment. We hypothesize that as the "chore dance" garners more attention on social media and spreads among more people, individuals will become more likely to follow the challenge that has been set up and submit their own dance clips. Once enough people have participated in

this challenge, it will rapidly spread through their peers as everyone tries to imitate and replicate the same behavior.

Procedure

In order to accurately test our hypothesis, we had to run the experiment in two groups, the control and the variable (experimental). First, we created a new instagram page, the username being the name of our dance challenge- @choredance. We then followed the accounts of our peers using this page to gain attention towards the challenge. This also resulted in the page gaining followers rapidly. Once the account reached fifty followers- this ensured the trend had a moderate audience- we released the dance challenge onto instagram. In doing this, we encouraged our followers and viewers of the video to submit their own videos of the challenge and also to nominate three others with the submission. After posting the initial video, we left the instagram page alone for the next three days and continued to record data, such as number of followers, likes, views, and comments that the post was getting. The first part- of just the introduction video- was the control group. The point of this was to test the number of submissions we would receive with no external factors influencing the viewers decision to submit a video.

After this initial period, we began the experimental group trial. The experimental group set up really demonstrated the role of mob mentality. In this part of the experiment, we posted five videos of five of our peers doing the chore dance challenge. This resulted in the challenge gaining much more attention and increased the activity on the instagram page. The experimental group allowed us to observe the role that mob mentality plays because those videos of others doing the challenge further influenced people to also participate in the challenge.

Throughout this experiment, we kept meticulous records of our findings. We recorded the data- number of submissions, number of followers, amount of likes on each post, number of comments, and amount of views- at least twice a day (most often 10am and 10pm). This data allowed us to track the growth of this dance trend and also observe the bigger theme of mob mentality influencing the audience. We posted submissions onto the instagram page as we got them and continued to record data for each post. While the instagram page is still online and open to everyone, for the sake of this experiment we focused on the first 144 hours, or 6 days. We dedicated 72 hours to the control part of this experiment and 72 hours to the experimental portion. In this time period, we made most of our observations. However, we still continued our data collection after this initial 144 hours.

Once the experiment had ended, we conducted interviews of our peers. We talked those that participated in this challenge as well as those that hadn't. We did this with the main goal of determining any other external factors swaying their decision of participating in the challenge and also determining what their views and perceptions of this trend were. This experiment helped us really understand how mob mentality can occur anywhere within a group of people. In fact, it happens every day to most of us on social media.

The variable, or changing factor, in this experiment was the five videos posted initially. These videos played a big role in influencing others to partake in this challenge. The independent variable was the time in which this experiment was conducted over because time was the unaffected factor among the other changing variables such as the number of followers, video submissions, and views. The dependent variable was the number of people that submitted a

dance video because that was the factor we were trying to evaluate, especially in reference to time and how mob mentality would influence the growth of this trend.

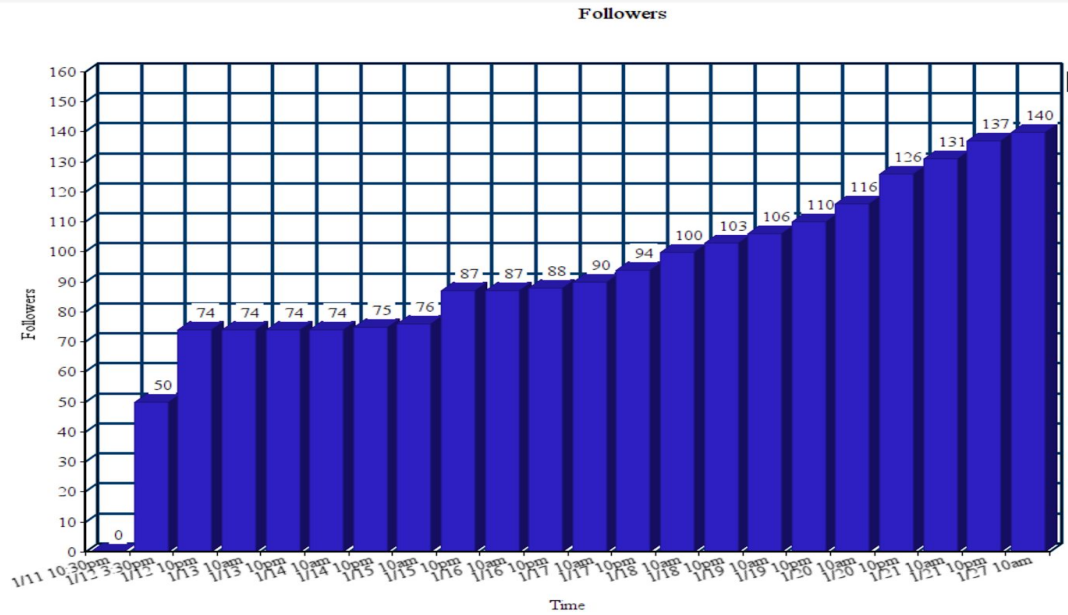
The subjects of this experiment were individuals on social media (Instagram). Although our social experiment was based on students from Monroe Township High School, we were still open to submissions from anyone. In essence, anyone on the internet was our subject.

Results

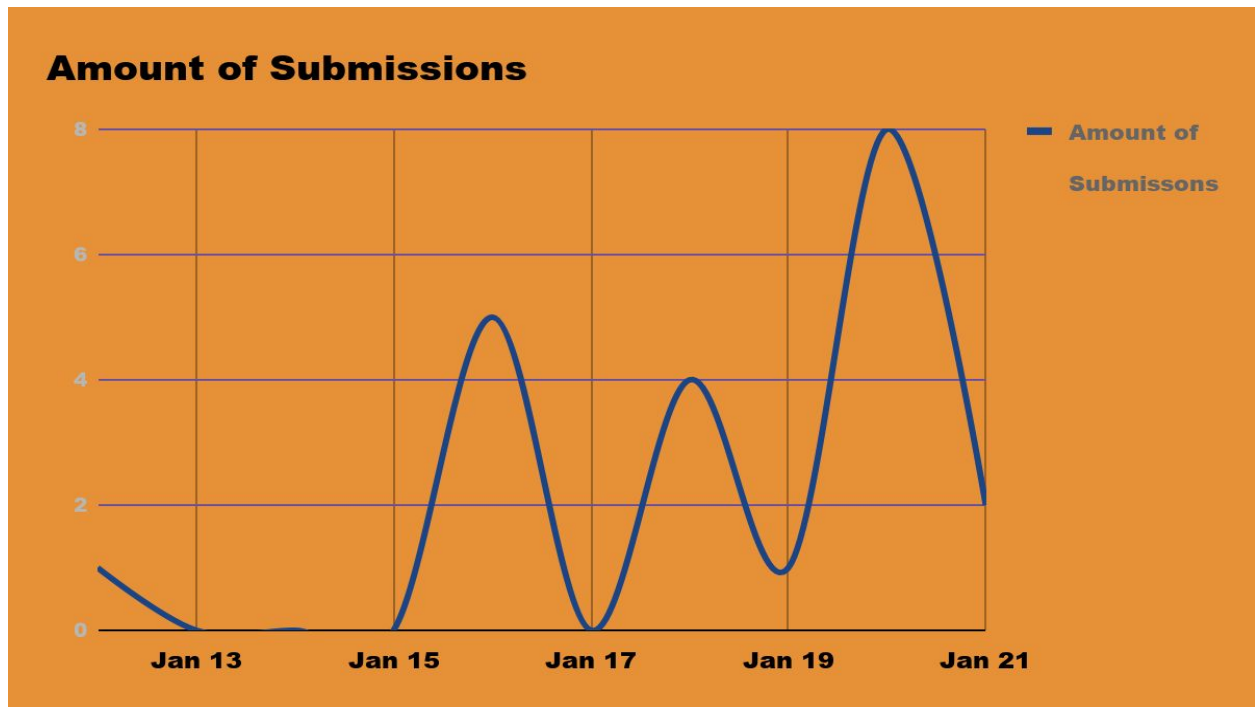
Table 1

	Day 1-3	Day 3-6	Day 6-9
Impressions (views)	554	2,560	6,153
Followers	50	100	140
Submission	0% of clips	31.25% of clips	100% of clips

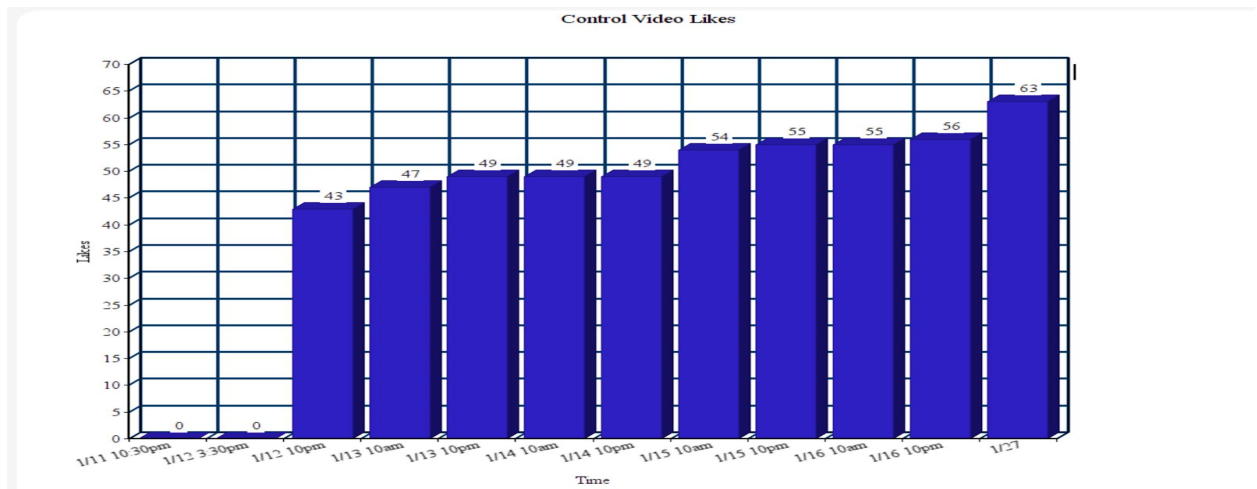
The impressions, followers, and submission rates all increased throughout the nine days (Table 1). A clear correlation can be seen between the number of followers and impressions and the number of submissions. As the number of submissions increased, so did the amount of views and followers the account garnered. Not shown on the graph, there were many other unexpected variables such as the number of comments per post. The number of comments per post averaged about thirty comments, some ranging up to a hundred.



The change in followers is drastic in the beginning as we had started at zero the first day, and then jumped to fifty the next day. The biggest increase in followers can be seen within the first three days, all other increases are gradual and steady (Followers).



The amount of submissions had sudden drops throughout the experiment. The first five submissions set forth an example for the viewers and influenced many peers to try the dance challenge (Amount of Submissions).



The amount of likes became stable after January twelfth and gradually increased till the end of the experiment. Once the video was posted and got the initial surge of attention and likes, all subsequent likes were few and far (Control Video Likes).

Conclusion/Reflection

The hypothesis we developed was supported by the conducting of this social experiment. Throughout the experiment, the number of followers gradually increased as our hypothesis had stated and the challenge gained a lot more attention as more people followed. Our followers began to recreate the dance videos and nominate others. An interesting result that we noticed was that there was a rapid attraction gained when multiple dances were posted as batches at the same time instead of separately. Also, videos that contained more than one person gained much more attention. While this isn't particularly surprising, it is still an interesting observation we made at the end of this experiment.

Something that embodied our theme of mob mentality was the fact that after the five initial videos were posted, the number of submissions soared, as did the number of likes and views. This exemplifies how individuals were prone to follow the actions of their peers and imitate the behaviors of those around them. The main factor that was expected in our experiment was that people would join in on the dance trend as the popularity of the Instagram account grew. The conduction of this experiment showed exactly what we expected it to because the consequences of mob mentality are simple and often easy to predict.

If we were to do a follow up experiment, a factor that could be changed is the song choice. We could leave the song option open to change and as long as the dance was related to the trend then it's submission would be allowed. We feel that opening up the song choice will allow the dancers to interact and have more fun with the challenge by embracing and showing off their music and overall getting to be more creative with their video. Through our experiment, we found a major factor in human psychology to be true: humans tend to follow big groups rather than doing something for self-satisfaction. This factor has been repeatedly proven from time to time with events and experiments such as the ALS ice bucket challenge and salem witch trials. The decisions of a group majorly affect the decisions of other people no matter if it occurs negatively or positively. Overall, our social experiment was a success. We tested and concluded what the effects and possible consequences of mob mentality are. Whether in simple challenges like the "chore dance" and ALS ice bucket challenge, or to dangerous ones such as the tide pod challenge, mob mentality has a huge effect on us as humans and it's important to be aware on how easily we are influenced by those around us.

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