

## **Obedience: a review of the literature applied to organisations**

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### **About the book**

Obedience literature emphasises that legitimate authority is a powerful and compelling force. This is particularly evident in Milgram's (1963, 1974) classic experiments where participants systematically shocked a helpless victim at the bidding of an experimenter. This literature review provides evidence that senior people have a powerful effect at influencing decisions of subordinates, even when outcomes contravene that individual's established views of best practice. Findings are consistent with the view that the majority of subordinates have as their first duty an obligation of obedience to instruction from superiors. This raises the question of how far it is possible for an employee to work as an autonomous practitioner within a hierarchical structure. In the absence of a feedback system, innovative thinking and talent may be overlooked and deficiencies and potential disasters lie undetected.

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