

Bandwagon Effect: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The bandwagon effect is the psychological phenomenon in which an individual does something because others, particularly a large group of others, are doing it. This action or behavior is done regardless of whether it aligns with the individual's personal belief or even factual evidence.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<p>Psychology, English, Economics/Marketing, Politics</p>	<p>30-45 minutes</p>
Video link:	
<p>https://academy4sc.org/topic/bandwagon-effect-hop-on/</p>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the bandwagon effect. • Explain how and why the bandwagon effect functions in every social field. • Combat the bandwagon effect in their daily lives. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
<p>Conformity</p>	
Materials Needed	
<p>A popular song and device to play music, Worksheet</p>	
Before you watch	
<p>If you can get student confidants in on your plan, play a popular, well-known song in your classroom. Encourage students to sing along. You'll need student confidants because students are highly unlikely to participate without outside motivation. Your confidants should be able to attract other students to join in.</p>	

If you fail to get students to sing, whether your confidants did not attract students or you decided against using confidants, this can also be a learning experience. Regardless of the results, question students about what just happened. Why did no one or few people sing at the beginning? Encourage students to think beyond simple answers like “I didn’t want to” or “I didn’t know the lyrics” to deeper responses. If this is difficult, try asking students if they’d sing along to the song in a different setting, and investigate the differences between the two environments. If students did finally join in on the fun, ask them why they did so. If students remained silent in the face of confidants, ask students if they noted a general change in the singers’ behavior as the song went on (your confidants will likely sing less loudly or stop outright). Investigate why this change occurred.

Alternatively, if your school holds dances, ask students to recall such events. Do they normally dance at the start of the event? The answer will likely be no. Yet by the end of the celebration, most students will be dancing. Ask them why this is. Again, try to lead them toward answers concerning conformity.

While you watch

Answer questions 1-4 on the corresponding Worksheet

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Have you ever been in the public minority when making a decision? How did this affect your confidence in your choice? Why?
2. How do you feel when others approve of your actions? How does this affect your confidence?
3. Which do you think is generally more influential: others’ opinions or facts? Which would you prefer to have supporting your decision?

Activity Ideas

- Answer questions 5-8 on corresponding Worksheet and share answers with the class
- Turn questions 7 and 8 into a role-play activity and have students act out how they would use the bandwagon effect in each scenario.
- Students role play as activists that want to convince the public to care about a social issue. How would they use the bandwagon effect to do this? Write or act it out.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Herpen, Erica van, Rik Pieters, and Marcel Zeelenberg. "When demand accelerates demand: Trailing the bandwagon." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol 19, issue 3, July 2009, pp. 302-312. Doi: 10.1016/j.jcps.2009.01.001.
2. Myers, David G., Sandra Brown Wojcicki, and Bobette S. Aardema. "Attitude Comparison: Is There Ever a Bandwagon Effect?" *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol 7, issue 4, Dec 1977, pp. 341-347. Doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1977.tb00758.x.
3. Navazio, Robert. "An Experimental Approach to Bandwagon Research." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 41, Issue 2, Summer 1977, pp. 217-225, Doi: 10.1086/268376.
4. O'Connor, Nick and Scott Clark. "Beware bandwagons! The bandwagon phenomenon in medicine, psychiatry and management." *Australasian Psychiatry*, 2019. Doi: 10.1177/1039856219848829.
5. Rikkers, Layton F. "The bandwagon effect." *Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery*, vol 6, issue 6, Dec 2002, pp. 787-794. Doi: 10.1016/S1091-255X(02)00054-9.

Notes

Cognitive biases and mental shortcuts often feed into each other. Such is the case between the bandwagon effect and groupthink. This can make them hard to differentiate. If students get the two confused, remind them that one doesn't need to be in an in-group for the bandwagon effect to occur - the individuals one is going along with do not necessarily have to share similarities to oneself.