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Persuasion target-related variables and compliance resistance in different interpersonal influence situations

The current study investigated compliance resistance in various interpersonal contexts. The 242 respondents who answered an online questionnaire were asked to recall a situation where they refused to comply with a request and to rate the degree of their compliance resistance. They also rated certain factors that were predicted to be related to noncompliance. Results indicated that the three dimensions of self-perceived credibility, intention to refuse compliance, and perceived control over refusal to comply had statistically significant correlations with compliance resistance. Two relational components—immediate interpersonal trust and relational closeness—also had statistically significant correlations with the strength of refusal to comply. Post hoc analysis demonstrated that four of the variables tested in the current study could serve as predictors of compliance resistance.

Key words: compliance resistance, noncompliance, compliance gaining, interpersonal influence

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Every day, people encounter and deal with various instances of persuasion—from attempts that aim to change attitudes or modify beliefs to efforts that intend to shape actions or influence behaviors. Some examples include convincing voters that a certain presidential candidate is competent to lead, persuading members of a religious organization to rethink some of their group's practices, asking relatives to taste a new dish, and requesting students to participate more actively in class. Although these situations share common features as they are all persuasive communication interactions, they also differ in some ways. One distinction lies in the communication context where the persuasion transpires. For instance, the second situation could possibly happen in a public setting (e.g., during a forum) whereas the third one could happen in an interpersonal environment (e.g., during a dinner). Another difference may be found in the nature of the persuasion product. The desired outcome, for example, in the first situation (i.e., attitude shift) is different from that of the last situation (i.e., behavioral change).

The interactions cited above offer a simple way to understand the differences between compliance gaining and traditional persuasion. Although the former is a form of persuasion, its shift of emphasis from public context to interpersonal setting signals its deviation from the traditional approach to studying persuasion (Wilson, 2016), which is mostly concerned with one-to-many interactions (Miller & Burgoon, 1978). Furthermore, the importance compliance gaining gives to message selection (Wilson, 2016) is a recognition of the complexity of the systems persuasion targets employ as they respond to a request presented to them. Many studies on request production, particularly the earlier ones, centered on building techniques (Johnson, 2016), presumably because researchers acknowledge that persuasion targets are not mere passive receivers in compliance-seeking events. Their active functions in influence transactions are more strongly underscored by how the compliance-gaining literature characterizes persuasion outcomes. Unlike traditional conceptualizations of persuasion products as changes in attitude (Miller & Burgoon, 1978), compliance gaining views persuasion results as concrete actions or behavioral displays (Gass & Seiter, 2016; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2005).

Although the strength of compliance gaining as a research area and its contributions to a more comprehensive understanding of the persuasion process cannot be denied, Gass and Seiter (2016) pointed out that it is often linked to persuasion agents. Similarly, Dillard and Knobloch (2011), in their analysis of compliance techniques, emphasized that the related literature upholds a linear framework which conveys the dominance of persuasion agents in influence situations. Lee et al. (1997) and McQuillen et al. (1984) made the same assessment and contended that a thorough appreciation of the influence process requires investigating the strategies of both agents and targets of persuasion.

To aid in addressing the inadequacy of compliance-gaining research which is reflected in its unidirectional model that seems to favor persuasion agents, the current study probed the relationships of selected persuasion target-related variables—self-perceived credibility (i.e., the persuasion target's assessment of their

own credibility), intention to refuse compliance, perceived control over refusal to comply, interpersonal trust, and relational closeness—with compliance resistance. Additionally, instead of focusing on a specific influence situation, it examined the phenomenon of noncompliance in different settings (defined by the types of interpersonal relationships and compliance-gaining attempts) to generate findings that may be applicable to a wide variety of interpersonal environments.

Compliance Resistance

The connection between compliance gaining and compliance resistance is highlighted in McLaughlin et al.'s (1980) argument that "strategies to resist compliance-gaining attempts may themselves be construed as compliance-gaining messages in which the 'target,' acting as an 'agent,' seeks to surmount various problems raised by her/his reluctance to comply" (p. 15). This proposes that noncompliance may also be a form of persuasion, but this kind of influence emanates from persuasion targets performing the role of persuasion agents.

The early scholarship (e.g., Burroughs et al., 1989; Hecht et al., 1992; Kearney et al., 1988; McLaughlin et al., 1980; Trost et al., 1999; White et al., 1989) and even the more recent body of literature (e.g., Bevan, 2003; Burroughs, 2007; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004; Holt et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2011) on compliance resistance convey two key points. First, they forward the notion that persuasion targets are not passive participants in influence situations. The use of different strategies to express refusal to comply shows that they try to ensure that they effectively respond to the compliance-gaining message they receive. Moreover, it may be argued that they utilize a variety of techniques to gain control of the interaction, preventing the persuasion agent from further seeking compliance. Also, because influence interactions entail managing the face (Wilson, 2016), it is possible that as they turn down the request presented to them, they consider both the persuasion outcome itself and its effects on their image or relationship with the source of compliance pursuit.

The second point that may be derived from past studies is that compliance resistance happens in many areas of human interaction. Whether in the contexts of education (e.g., Burroughs, 2007; Zhang et al., 2011), health (e.g., Holt et al., 2020), and family (e.g., White et al., 1989), or in other relational settings (e.g., Bevan, 2003; Trost et al., 1999), researchers aim to have a better appreciation of why and how people resist compliance. Given its occurrence in a wide range of situations, a model that is not dependent on the features of a single communication environment should be developed to advance knowledge about compliance resistance.

Credibility and Compliance/Noncompliance

Credibility, which is defined as the perception of a communicator's believability (O'Keefe, 2002), is regarded as an indispensable component of persuasion

(McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Its role in influence situations is stressed in studies probing the connection between credibility, or one of its hypothesized dimensions, and compliance. For instance, Pornpitakpan (2004) found that perceptions of celebrity endorsers' credibility are positively related to individuals' intention to purchase a product. Messner et al. (2008) concluded that physical attractiveness, another variable associated with credibility (Ohanian, 1990), has an impact on compliance. Wrench and Booth-Butterfield (2003) found that physicians' credibility is correlated with the compliance-gaining techniques they use. In another study, Pytlak and Houser (2014) observed that behavior alteration techniques, which share common properties with compliance-gaining strategies, can predict credibility in an instructional communication setting. Even more importantly, Marwell and Schmitt (1967), in their seminal work on compliance gaining, found that expertise—a known dimension of credibility (O'Keefe, 2002)—is one of the main clusters of compliance-gaining strategies. Cody et al. (1980) supported this finding by including the category of expertise claims in their typology of compliance-gaining techniques.

Because the foregoing discussion establishes the vital position of credibility in relation to compliance, there is merit in determining its relationship with noncompliance. Whereas it may be more common to assess communication sources' credibility and how it correlates with message receivers' refusal to comply, the current study attaches it to persuasion targets, and thus, focuses on their self-perceived credibility. The rationale behind this is that compliance-resistance research views persuasion targets as performing the role of persuasion agents in noncompliance situations (McLaughlin et al., 1980; McQuillen et al., 1984). Moreover, Baseheart and Bostrom (1972) found that when persuasion targets believe that they are more qualified on the subject matter than the source, it is difficult to modify their attitude. Therefore, it is likely that their resistance to persuasion is partly brought about by their positive judgments of their knowledge and competence. It is possible then that persuasion targets' self-perceived credibility is correlated with their compliance resistance.

To clarify, self-perceived credibility is conceptualized in the current study as the persuasion target's evaluation of their own credibility. Due to the multidimensional nature of credibility (Gass & Seiter, 2016), it is necessary to gauge its facets—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill (McCroskey & Teven, 1999)—separately. Additionally, McCroskey (2007) maintained that in using McCroskey and Teven's (1999) credibility instrument, three separate scores should be computed. Taking this into account, the current study forwarded the following hypothesis (with subhypotheses), which focused on how receivers of persuasion attempts assess their own credibility via its competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill dimensions:

H1: There is a positive relationship between persuasion targets' self-perceived credibility (i.e., self-perceived competence, self-perceived trustworthiness, and self-perceived goodwill) and their compliance resistance.

Behavioral Intention, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Compliance/Noncompliance

Refusal to comply with a request may not always be a product of persuasion agents' characteristics and strategies but could also be a function of persuasion targets' intention and control over the situation. For example, if they have a strong intention to refuse compliance, it might be challenging for a source of persuasion to convince them to act favorably on the request regardless of their techniques. Likewise, if persuasion targets have significant control over the interaction, it might be easier for them to refuse compliance. In short, both behavioral intention and behavioral control are crucial in communicating refusal to comply.

Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) aims to estimate behavioral performance via the antecedent process of behavioral intention. The TPB is an expansion of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA). The two theories rest on similar foundations in the sense that most of their propositions regarding the factors that affect intention are parallel. Specifically, they both posit that behavioral intention is a product of attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms associated with said behavior (Ajzen, 1985). What separates the two though is the TPB's inclusion of perceived behavioral control which is argued to influence not only the behavior of interest but even the intention that precedes the actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Although the assumptions of the TPB are not exclusive to persuasion, as they are generally applicable to acts that involve performance of a behavior, they are valuable in comprehending influence interactions that require a behavioral change. This is founded on research that investigated compliance via the TPB in various contexts (e.g., Elliott et al., 2003; Poulter et al., 2008; Record, 2017). If it could be used in understanding compliance, it could also explain refusal to comply as both are forms of behavior. Taking into account that compliance resistance is not the persuasion agent's expected outcome in compliance-gaining situations (Ifert, 2000), the argument that behaviors are guided by plans (Ajzen, 1985), and that human beings think about the possible consequences of their behaviors before executing them (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), the current study also advanced the following hypotheses:

H2: There is a positive relationship between persuasion targets' intention to refuse compliance and their perceived control over refusal to comply.

H3: There is a positive relationship between persuasion targets' intention to refuse compliance and their compliance resistance.

H4: There is a positive relationship between persuasion targets' perceived control over refusal to comply and their compliance resistance.

Interpersonal Trust, Relational Closeness, and Compliance/ Noncompliance

Wilson (2016) stressed that participants in influence situations consider their interpersonal relations as they find ways to produce an action or a behavioral change. Cialdini and Trost (1998) also expressed the importance of relational variables in studies of interpersonal influence by outlining the difference between people's responses to the needs of the other depending on whether they share a communal or an exchange relationship. Further, the different relational settings of (non)compliance studies cited earlier illustrated that it is important to probe the concepts that define interpersonal relationship types. The current study included two variables that can differentiate interpersonal ties—interpersonal trust and relational closeness.

Rotter (1967) explained that although interpersonal trust shares some similarities with trustworthiness, they are distinct as the latter is more strongly associated with popularity. They also emphasized that interpersonal trust, fundamentally defined as the confidence of one party that the other's statements are reliable, is also different from the more general concept of trust: "this definition clearly departs significantly from Erikson's (1953) broad use of the concept of basic trust which Erikson describes as a central ingredient in 'the healthy personality'" (Rotter, 1967, p. 651). From these, it is evident that despite the broadness of interpersonal trust, it still has unique features which separate it from other related concepts. Giffin (1967) offered a matching conceptualization by arguing that "interpersonal trust in the communication process is defined as reliance upon the communication of another person in order to achieve a desired but uncertain objective in a risky situation" (p. 104).

Previous research supports the connection between interpersonal trust and compliance. For example, Dibben and Lean (2003) found that interpersonal trust may shape patient-physician relationships, which, in turn, could influence patient compliance. In another context, Hung et al. (2011) showed that interpersonal trust has an impact on people's intent to consider various brands, thus suggesting that it could affect consumption behaviors. These, among the previously cited studies on the dynamics of compliance in diverse relational environments which differ with respect to interpersonal trust, underpin its potential to be a factor of compliance resistance.

Another situational variable that may be linked to compliance is relational closeness. Although it is often attached to other related concepts like intimacy, Parks and Floyd (1996) found that closeness has a wider conceptual spectrum manifested in the broad range of meanings associated with it. Dibble et al. (2012) affirmed this by citing relationships that are not classified as intimate (e.g., strangers, friends, or coworkers) yet may vary in closeness. If it could define interpersonal affiliations and if interpersonal relationships have a role in compliance events, then there is reason to expect that closeness has an impact on noncom-

pliance. By way of example, Claus et al. (2012) found that closeness is negatively related to likelihood of using antisocial behavior alteration techniques. In another study in instructional communication, Zhang and Sapp (2013) observed that closeness is one of the variables that could influence students' responses to teachers' requests. These conclusions illustrate that closeness as an element of interpersonal relationship may be essential in scrutinizing compliance resistance. Summarizing all the aforementioned points, compliance resistance could be a function of interpersonal relational contexts which are partly defined by both interpersonal trust and relational closeness. Therefore, this study posed the following:

RQ1: What is the relationship, if any, between persuasion targets' interpersonal trust toward the persuasion agent and their compliance resistance?

RQ2: What is the relationship, if any, between persuasion targets' perceived relational closeness with the persuasion agent and their compliance resistance?

Method

Respondents

There were 242 respondents in this study. Their ages ranged from 21 to 70 years old (M = 35.91, SD = 10.84). Most of them (n = 138, 57.0%) were male; 103 (42.6%) were female; and one (0.4%) answered that they were neither male nor female. The majority was Caucasian/White (n = 179, 74.0%), and the others identified as African American/Black (n = 28, 11.6%), Asian (n = 19, 7.9%), Hispanic /Latino/a (n = 9, 3.7%), African (n = 1, 0.4%), and Native American (n = 1, 0.4%). The remaining respondents (n = 5, 2.1%) either indicated mixed racial/ethnic backgrounds or did not supply a specific response.

Data Collection

Data collection, which started after receiving the approval of the Institutional Review Board, was done through a questionnaire on Qualtrics. Originally, only the responses of those who rejected a request within the last 14 days were considered. However, upon further examination, even the responses of those who refused compliance beyond the 14-day period were also included as long as they gave logical responses to the open-ended items. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was used in recruiting respondents. Paolacci et al. (2010) cited the benefits of using MTurk for projects that involve human subjects, such as maintaining anonymity and setting criteria or qualifications for respondents or participants. Other scholars (e.g., Buhrmester et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2013) also offered encouraging findings about employing said platform for research.

Like any online research tool, MTurk also has limitations. Therefore, all the gathered data were checked to identify those that were usable. Because the current study was part of a bigger project which used a questionnaire that had open-ended

items, it was not very challenging to identify and exclude the response sets of internet bots as they could not provide cogent answers to questions requiring detailed responses. As an additional layer of protection against bots, upon completing the questionnaire, the respondents were each provided a unique five-digit random code which they entered into the MTurk system to receive their compensation of $1.50 for answering the approximately 10-minute survey. All those who entered a valid code received their payment regardless of the usability of their responses.

Scales

Apart from the items for the main variables (and for the other part of the project not reported in the current study) and standard survey parts (e.g., study description, instructions, informed consent form), the questionnaire also included questions about the respondents' relationship with the persuasion agent, their basic demographic information, and an approximate date of when they refused compliance. To measure the degree of compliance resistance, four questions gauged the respondents' willingness to change their decision of refusal to comply on seven-point semantic differential scales. The response anchors used were based on previous studies which evaluated likelihood of compliance or resistance (e.g., Burroughs, 2007; Burroughs et al., 1989; Kearney et al., 1988). The three dimensions of self-perceived credibility were quantified largely through McCroskey and Teven's (1999) source credibility instrument. Using seven-point semantic differential scales, the respondents were asked about how they were feeling about themselves during the interaction where they rejected a particular request.

There were originally two questions for intention to refuse compliance and three for perceived control over refusal to comply on seven-point semantic differential scales. The keywords used in the items and response options were based on past studies that examined the propositions of the TPB (e.g., Bamberg et al., 2003; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). For interpersonal trust, using Wheeless and Grotz's (1977) individualized trust scale, the respondents were asked to indicate, on 15 seven-point semantic differential items, their feelings about the persuasion agent during the compliance-resistance interaction. According to Rubin (2004), Wheeless and Grotz's set of measures differs from other related instruments as it centers on interpersonal trust toward a particular individual and not on general trust in people. Finally, Aron et al.'s (1992) pictorial scale—the inclusion of other in the self scale—was employed to determine relational closeness by asking the respondents to choose the picture that best described their relationship with the persuasion agent.

Several statistical tests (using R/RStudio and SPSS version 27) were performed to check the appropriateness of the measures used in this study. A nonparametric item response theory approach—Mokken scale analysis (MSA; Mokken, 1971)—was utilized to examine the sets of measures that included at least three items. For the items for intention to refuse compliance, correlation analyses were performed. Because they did not statistically significantly correlate with each

other, both of them were tested in relation to the items for perceived control over refusal to comply. The one item that did not correlate with any of the three items for perceived control over refusal to comply was excluded from further analyses. For the interpersonal trust instrument which was composed of several items, a principal component analysis (PCA) was first conducted to determine if it had more than one dimension. The procedure yielded two components—developed interpersonal trust and immediate interpersonal trust—which were further examined using an MSA. After finalizing the compositions of the scale sets with multiple items based on the results of the abovementioned scale analyses, reliability analyses were performed.

Relational closeness was quantified through a single-item measure based on Aron et al.'s (1992) instrument. Gächter et al. (2015) closely examined this pictorial tool by correlating it with other relevant scales. They also developed an index of relationship closeness via a PCA and inspected its relationship with the pictorial scale. They concluded that Aron et al.'s measure is effective in gauging relational closeness. Table 1 presents the items that were retained based on the scale assessments performed.

Data Analyses

To test H1 which predicted a positive relationship between each of the dimensions of self-perceived credibility and compliance resistance, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The same test was utilized for H2, H3, and H4, which predicted positive relationships between and among intention to refuse compliance, perceived control over refusal to comply, and compliance resistance; as well as for RQ1 and RQ2 which asked about the relationships of interpersonal trust and relational closeness with compliance resistance. Another procedure—a post hoc multiple regression analysis—was carried out based on the results of correlation tests (further explained in the next section). The statistical analyses used to address the objectives of this study were performed at $\alpha = .05$ using SPSS version 27. Confidence intervals that were not included in the SPSS outputs were estimated using online calculators. The programs developed by Lowry (n.d.) and Soper (2021) were employed for deriving the confidence intervals for correlation and multiple regression coefficients, respectively.

Results

Before presenting the main findings, it is important to first report the relational situations where the respondents expressed refusal to comply and enumerate the types of requests they rejected to convey the diversity of interpersonal influence environments covered by this study. Based on the data provided by the 242 respondents, 114 (47.1%) instances of compliance resistance happened in the context of friendship, 50 (20.7%) in familial relationships, 28 (11.6%) in

Table 1. *Retained Items Based on the Scale Analyses*

Variable	Item	*M*	*SD*
Compliance resistance MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .85	Item 1: How willing are you to change your decision of rejecting (name of the persuasion agent)'s request? Willing—Unwilling	5.10	1.83
	Item 2: What is the probability that you would change your decision of rejecting that request? Improbable—Probable*	4.82	1.97
	Item 3: How likely is it that you would change your decision of rejecting that request? Unlikely—Likely*	4.82	2.04
	Item 4: Given another chance, would you change your decision of rejecting that request? Would—Would not	5.33	1.71
Self-perceived competence MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .82	Item 1: Intelligent—Unintelligent*	5.18	1.50
	Item 2: Untrained—Trained	5.01	1.42
	Item 4: Informed—Uninformed*	5.19	1.61
	Item 5: Incompetent—Competent	5.30	1.64
	Item 6: Bright—Stupid*	4.83	1.58
Self-perceived trustworthiness MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .87	Item 1: Honest—Dishonest*	5.38	1.80
	Item 2: Untrustworthy—Trustworthy	5.34	1.54
	Item 3: Honorable—Dishonorable*	4.92	1.59
	Item 4: Moral—Immoral*	5.09	1.61
	Item 5: Unethical—Ethical	5.45	1.48
	Item 6: Phony—Genuine	5.41	1.59
Self-perceived goodwill MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .79	Item 1: Cared about other people—Did not care about other people*	4.62	1.69
	Item 2: Had other people's interests at heart—Did not have other people's interests at heart*	4.34	1.75
	Item 4: Concerned with others—Not concerned with others*	4.25	1.79
	Item 5: Insensitive—Sensitive	4.99	1.48
	Item 6: Not understanding—Understanding	5.22	1.39
Intention to refuse compliance	Item 1: Before making a decision on (name of the persuasion agent)'s request, how would you rate your intention not to comply? Very strong—Very weak*	4.69	1.75
Perceived control over refusal to comply MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .83	Item 1: What was it like to reject (name of the persuasion agent)'s request? Extremely easy—Extremely difficult*	4.20	1.84
	Item 2: How would you rate your capability to reject (name of the persuasion agent)'s request? Very high—Very low*	4.92	1.80
	Item 3: How would you rate the control you had over your decision to reject the request? Very high—Very low*	5.11	1.86
Developed interpersonal trust MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .94	Item 1: Trustworthy—Untrustworthy*	4.67	1.95
	Item 2: Trustful of this person—Distrustful of this person*	4.55	1.93
	Item 5: Safe—Dangerous*	4.78	1.83
	Item 9: Respectful—Disrespectful*	4.74	1.84
	Item 11: Honest—Dishonest*	4.91	1.88
	Item 12: Reliable—Unreliable*	4.49	1.91
	Item 15: Careful—Careless*	4.31	1.88
Immediate interpersonal trust MSA: Satisfied all the indicators Cronbach's α = .88	Item 6: Deceptive—Candid	4.60	1.79
	Item 7: Deceitful—Not deceitful	4.54	2.02
	Item 8: Tricky—Straightforward	4.76	1.96
Relational closeness	Item 1: Please choose the picture that best describes your relationship with (name of the persuasion agent). Set of seven overlapping circles	4.37	1.77

Note. * = reverse scoring was done.

nonpersonal encounters, 25 (10.3%) in professional interactions, and 19 (7.9%) in romantic partnerships. Six (2.5%) respondents did not specify how they were related to the persuasion agent. The majority of the compliance-gaining attempts that the respondents denied could be described as requests for (a) company or presence, (b) action benefitting the agent, (c) action benefitting other people, (d) material support, and (e) relational commitment. The others could be interpreted as requests (a) associated with negative emotions, (b) characterized by mutual gains, (c) involving other individuals, and (d) favoring the target. Only a few responses did not share similar features and could not be grouped with any of the other responses. As stated earlier, the current study was part of a bigger project which involved forming typologies of rejected requests and compliance-resistance strategies (see de Pano, 2023 for details). Indeed, these categories and the relational settings mentioned above illustrate a broad array of interpersonal influence situations where the respondents displayed refusal to comply.

For H1, findings from correlation analyses revealed that self-perceived competence, self-perceived trustworthiness, and self-perceived goodwill had statistically significant positive correlations with compliance resistance. For H2, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between intention to refuse compliance and perceived control over refusal to comply. Next, for H3, results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between intention to refuse compliance and compliance resistance. Finally, testing H4, results demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived control over refusal to comply and compliance resistance.

Because interpersonal trust had two components, the relationship of each component with compliance resistance was tested to answer RQ1. Results of Pearson correlation analyses suggested that there was no statistically significant correlation between developed interpersonal trust and compliance resistance. However, the second component—immediate interpersonal trust—had a statistically significant positive correlation with compliance resistance. For RQ2, a Pearson correlation test revealed that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between relational closeness and compliance resistance. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients and other relevant information.

A post hoc multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how refusal to comply could be predicted from the variables which were found to have statistically significant correlations with compliance resistance. Although the goal of this study was to determine only the individual correlations of certain persuasion target-related variables with compliance resistance, the statistically significant relationships that were observed prompted another layer of analysis. That is, a regression analysis was performed as an initial step toward the possibility of building a model composed of variables that are linked to receivers of persuasion attempts which can explain how compliance resistance operates and functions in interpersonal influence contexts.

Table 2. *Correlations for the Study Variable*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Compliance resistance (*M* = 5.02, *SD* = 1.58)	Perceived control over refusal to comply (*M* = 4.74, *SD* = 1.58)
Self-perceived competence	5.10	1.18	.46** 95% CI [.36, .55]	
Self-perceived trustworthiness	5.27	1.25	.41** 95% CI [.30, .51]	
Self-perceived goodwill	4.68	1.20	.20* 95% CI [.07, .31]	
Intention to refuse compliance	4.69	1.75	.43** 95% CI [.32, .52]	.50** 95% CI [.40, .59]

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

After the initial regression analyses, self-perceived trustworthiness, self-perceived goodwill, and relational closeness were eventually excluded. Self-perceived competence, $t(237) = 3.39$, $p = .001$, intention to refuse compliance, $t(237) = 3.43$, $p = .001$, perceived control over refusal to comply, $t(237) = 4.37$, $p < .001$, and immediate interpersonal trust, $t(237) = 3.24$, $p = .001$ were statistically significant predictors of compliance resistance. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 237) = 36.14$, $p < .001$, $R = .62$, $R^2 = .38$ (adjusted $R^2 = .37$), 95% CI for R^2 [.28, .47], suggesting that the four variables could predict compliance resistance.

Discussion

What is common in many of the studies on credibility and compliance cited earlier was their treatment of the former as a concept that affects the persuasion outcome but is almost exclusively associated with persuasion agents. This study's findings challenge this idea and suggest that it is also valuable to attach it to persuasion targets. The positive relationship between self-perceived credibility and refusal to comply offers evidence to forward the notion that people's evaluations of their credibility may influence how they respond to a request: the more credible they believe they are, the stronger their compliance resistance.

Because credibility is a product of perception (O'Keefe, 2002), it is of little value to problematize if people's judgment of their own credibility is accurate or based on an objective set of criteria. If they believe that they are credible in the transaction where compliance is sought, they feel more empowered to decline a request. However, the findings do not imply that high self-perceived credibility alone leads to noncompliance especially because a causal interaction cannot be derived from the data. What the current study underscores is the idea that the positive relationship between the two may mean that high or positive self-perceived credibility might protect persuasion targets from being easily convinced to comply. Conversely, low or negative self-perceived credibility could make them either more prone to responding favorably to a request or more easily reconsider their

refusal to comply. Indeed, the findings support Baseheart and Bostrom's (1972) claim that message receivers' perception of their own credibility has a role in how they process a persuasion attempt.

McQuillen et al. (1984) posited that the act of refusing compliance is not self-initiated. The central arguments of this study do not oppose this. In fact, the findings bolster such a supposition by showing that compliance resistance happens as a response to a compliance-seeking behavior. However, it must be emphasized that persuasion targets are more than just reactive receivers. They are proactive participants who can assess their qualifications and use this assessment to express their noncompliance when they find it necessary. It is likely, then, that regardless of the persuasion agent's characteristics and techniques, persuasion targets may still demonstrate strong compliance resistance when they feel confident about their credibility.

The findings on the positive relationships between and among intention to refuse compliance, perceived control over refusal to comply, and compliance resistance reinforce the propositions of Ajzen's (1985, 1991) TPB. The strength of the presented evidence is further augmented by the method by which the data were gathered. Because it used past experiences rather than hypothetical situations, there is greater confidence to contend that behavioral intention and perceived behavioral control are both associated with actual behavior.

Although the TPB is not specific to persuasion events alone as it is generally applicable to any act that involves performance of a behavior (i.e., there are behaviors that are performed without the need for any external influence), many past studies used it to investigate the act of complying (e.g., Elliott et al., 2003; Poulter et al., 2008; Record, 2017). The current study's findings offer evidence of the TPB's usefulness in comprehending even refusal to comply. In fact, the theory may be especially appropriate in examining noncompliance as Ifert (2000) mentioned that compliance resistance is not aligned with the desire of the persuasion agent. If it is an unexpected reaction to a request and given Wilson's (2016) argument that gaining and refusing compliance entail managing the face and preserving interpersonal ties, there is merit in presupposing that persuasion targets carefully strategize to express their refusal to comply to ensure that they communicate noncompliance without doing relational damage.

The process described above is consistent with Ajzen's (1985) view that behaviors are formed via plans. Additionally, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), being the proponents of the TRA (from where the TPB originated), posited that people contemplate the impact of their behaviors prior to acting on them. Clearly, the nature of compliance resistance motivates persuasion targets to reflect on the effects of their noncompliance not only in relation to whether the source of persuasion would forward another attempt to convince them but even in connection with their relationship with the persuasion agent.

The positive relationship between intention to refuse compliance and compliance resistance conveys that people could create a plan despite the usually spontaneous nature of compliance-gaining endeavors. Even if there is only a short

interval between the occurrence of a compliance attempt and the expression of compliance resistance, persuasion targets could still develop a scheme that guarantees that their intention converts into their desired action. The positive correlation between perceived control over refusal to comply and compliance resistance builds the basis to claim that people's beliefs about the resources (whether material or in the form of power) available to them are related to the strength of their compliance resistance. This suggests that the more people believe that they have the control over the situation, the greater their degree of refusal to comply.

Considering the conceptualization and operationalization of behavioral intention presented in this study, it might be helpful to offer an additional explanation that is still consistent with the interpretation above. It is possible that a plan to refuse compliance, in the context of the current study, is not necessarily formed in the interpersonal influence event where noncompliance is articulated. It may be that persuasion targets devise plans of how they would respond to different compliance-gaining efforts and execute them during the interaction. Said plans might vary depending on many factors, such as their relationship with the persuasion agent, the nature of the request they deal with, and other elements that are present (or expected to be present) in the interpersonal influence environment.

The relationships of interpersonal trust and relational closeness with compliance resistance were tested to trace their influence on noncompliance based on the assumption that they differentiate relational types. Their correlations with noncompliance suggest that relationship types, defined by interpersonal trust and closeness, may have an influence on the degree of compliance resistance. Interpersonal trust was found to have two components. Because of its complex structure, it is not surprising that it is not unidimensional. What is puzzling, however, is the finding that only one of its two components—labeled in this study as immediate interpersonal trust—had a correlation with compliance resistance. A possible explanation for this is that people use a wide range of criteria in gauging interpersonal trust, and not all of these are activated when they are in a compliance situation. It may be that only those elements associated with more obvious behavioral displays are related to compliance resistance. Those that are anchored in continuous and long-term interactions (i.e., elements represented by the items used to measure developed interpersonal trust) do not play a substantial part in compliance-resistance situations.

Another intriguing finding is the positive direction of the association between immediate interpersonal trust and compliance resistance. Admittedly, it is less challenging to interpret a negative relationship as it makes sense to assume that a higher level of trust is related to a lower level of compliance resistance. One likely reason for the unanticipated result is that people's immediate interpersonal trust perhaps leads them not to expect a compliance attempt from the persuasion agent. When the action of the persuasion agent violates their expectation, they exhibit noncompliance. Following this notion, people who have higher immediate interpersonal trust toward the persuasion agent may demonstrate stronger

compliance resistance. Another alternative explanation is that immediate interpersonal trust is formed based on less significant or less stable aspects of interpersonal trust. In other words, it is not deep-seated. Therefore, it is difficult to expect that as it increases, compliance resistance decreases.

The negative correlation of relational closeness with compliance resistance advances an expected link between the two variables. Although it is not a case of causation, it implies that higher relational closeness is associated with weaker refusal to comply. If lower compliance resistance translates into a greater consideration to reverse the decision of noncompliance, there is a possibility that as persuasion targets feel closer to the persuasion agent, the more likely that they would change their initial decision to refuse compliance. Overall, the finding confirms the conclusion of past studies that closeness plays an important role in compliance events (e.g., Claus et al., 2012; Zhang & Sapp, 2013).

The results of post hoc analysis have several implications. They demonstrate that the relationships of self-perceived competence (one of the three dimensions of self-perceived credibility), intention to refuse compliance, perceived control over refusal to comply, and immediate interpersonal trust with noncompliance go beyond individual correlations as they can be used to predict compliance resistance. Additionally, the findings indicate that these four variables taken together can be utilized to initiate the building of a model of compliance resistance that might be applicable to various interpersonal relational contexts. The findings also suggest the possibility of predicting compliance resistance based mainly on variables that are associated with receivers of persuasion attempts, implying that although the characteristics of persuasion agents and the techniques they employ can affect the outcome of a compliance-gaining interaction, the power of and the factors related to persuasion targets cannot be underestimated.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current study presents interesting findings on compliance resistance, it has many limitations. For self-perceived credibility, comparison of persuasion targets' evaluation of their own credibility and their perception of the persuasion agent's credibility may produce stronger evidence of credibility's role in interpersonal influence. The other variables included in the TPB should also be examined to determine how they are possibly associated with noncompliance. Regarding the interactive nature of compliance, if the outcomes of compliance-gaining messages or strategies are often evaluated, the results of compliance-resistance expressions should also be investigated. That is, scholars may need to account for the persuasion agent's response to the persuasion target's compliance-resistance message. Regarding the relationships of compliance resistance with the persuasion target-related variables examined in the current study, a follow-up project focusing on how receivers of persuasion attempts respond to compliance-seeking encounters (constructed based on the types of re-

jected requests enumerated earlier) may be carried out. Conducting such a study could aid in validating the findings presented in the current study and in exploring other ways to operationalize compliance resistance. Lastly, for the model of compliance resistance, more sophisticated statistical treatments may be valuable in comprehending the complexity of noncompliance.

Conclusion

Although the findings of the current study do not advance causal interactions, they support the central argument that persuasion targets are not mere passive receivers in interpersonal influence situations. The statistically significant relationships between the examined variables and compliance resistance demonstrate the capacity of persuasion targets to control compliance-seeking events. That is, despite the various strategies persuasion agents employ to secure compliance, an effort to affect persuasion targets' action or behavior may still fail as the decision to comply ultimately rests with receivers of persuasion attempts. Following this, it is important to further study the dynamics of compliance resistance and the functions of persuasion targets in interpersonal influence transactions. The purpose is not to develop more compliance-gaining techniques or aid persuasion agents in ensuring that their goal is achieved. Rather, the aim is to identify the factors that are related to persuasion targets' decision to refuse compliance and understand why they arrive at said decision despite the risks involved (e.g., damaging the relationship, compromising the face/image).

The shift of focus to persuasion targets (by examining noncompliance) strengthens the notion emphasized earlier that compliance resistance may also be viewed as a form of influence. From this conceptualization, it becomes very important to continuously examine how persuasion targets process and respond to interpersonal requests presented to them. It is also crucial to define their considerations for refusing compliance as these factors are critical in appreciating the kind of persuasion that emanates from supposed receivers of compliance-gaining efforts. Covering these areas allows for advancing an understanding of the interpersonal influence process from the perspective of persuasion targets.

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Research Ethics Statement

The research implementation process went through the evaluation of The University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board. I used a survey for the study. The informed consent form included the following sections (which explained fully what the respondents would expect upon participating in the study): (a) purpose of the study, (b) what they would do in the study, (c) time required, (d) risks, (e) benefits, (f) confidentiality, (g) voluntary participation, (h) right to withdraw from the study, (i) how to withdraw from the study, and (j) compensation for participating. The informed consent form also included my contact number and the contact information of my advisor and the Institutional Review Board's office.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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