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SALUTE TO THE BLACK SHEEP: THE LEGITIMACY OF WORK-PLACE BULLYING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COHESIVE AFFINITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of black sheep effect on organizational or group performance by exploring the role of group cohesiveness and group development. Black sheep effect occurs when members of the organization facing high task related pressure or strong competition and the pressure or tension cannot be released. Therefore, someone (black sheep) in the organization will be isolated, bullied, or disregard by others to adjust the pressure or aspire the sense of belonging. In this situation, those bullies and bystanders become "butchers" and "(white) sheep" without conscious. Consequently, there is forming a unusual phenomenon that a group of good people bully a good person. Prior research has paid lots of attention on the reason why black sheep effect and bully's behavior occur within organization. However, little is known on black sheep's contribution to the organization or group. This study takes a neutral posture to explore the relationship between workplace bullying and black sheep effect in organization, and illustrate if the influence of this phenomenon has benefit result in the view of whole organization. This study proposed that black sheep effect is positively related to group cohesiveness, and group cohesiveness is positively related to group development. In contrast with prior research focusing on psychological point of view, this study enables management to extend the focus from individual to organization standpoint and develop specific strategy toward a positive attitude on black sheep effect.

Keywords: black sheep effect, group cohesiveness, group development, social identity theory, self-categorization theory, task commitment, workplace bullying

Introduction

Lots of prior social psychology researches indicated that perceivers' reaction is different depending on the target belongs to ingroup or outgroup. According to ingroup favoritism effect, perceivers have more positivity reaction

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to the ingroup member rather than the outgroup member (Allen & Wilder, 1975; Lewis & Sherman, 2010; Appiah et al., 2013). In a later period, only social scientists studied the theory opposite to ingroup favoritism effect. For example, Marques and his colleagues have proposed in a series of studies about "black sheep effect" (Marques, et al., 1992; Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988; Marques et al., 1988). When the feature or evaluation of the target is exactly negative, the perceiver's response to the ingroup target will be more extreme and unfavorable than the outgroup target.

Although ingroup favoritism effect and the black sheep effect represent two completely opposite result for the ingroup member, Marques and his colleagues believed that the theoretical basis for the two effects is the same - social identity theory (Marques et al., 1992; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This theory indicates that both ingroup favoritism effect and black sheep effect have the same potential motivation (Harmon-Kizer, 2016; Long et al, 2017). By giving a positive evaluation to an individual in the group, the positive identification of the ingroup membership is enhanced, provided that the feature of the target is judged to be favorable or ambiguous by members in the group. On the other hand, when the target is identified as clearly unfavorable, the response to the ingroup target is more negative and severe than the outgroup target. Because when the target belongs to the ingroup, it is more relevant to other members of the group. Therefore, such a person will devalue the psychological value and self-identity of other members in the group (Steffens, et al., 2018 Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The occurrence of some workplace bullying can be explained by the black sheep effect. Lewis and Sherman (2010) proposed that the *"negative ingroup members from high perceived entitativity groups may pose a meaningful threat to the perceiver's social identity that can be alleviated by denigrating the target"* (p211). Specifically, when ingroup members facing high task related pressure or strong competition and the pressure or tension cannot be released, someone (black sheep) in that group will be isolated, bullied, or disregard by others to adjust the pressure or aspire the sense of belonging. In this situation, those bullies and bystanders become "butchers" and "(white) sheep" without conscious. Consequently, there is forming a unusual phenomenon that a group of good people bully a good person.

To mention the impact of groups on organizations, one must think about group cohesiveness among members. Social scientists explain group cohesiveness in different ways. It is believed believes that group cohesiveness can be explained by interpersonal attraction, that is, when team members have active emotions with each other, there will be forming group cohesiveness (Lott & Lott, 1965; McLaughlin & Parent, 2019; Schaffer, 2019). And social scientists believe that the cohesiveness between group members stems from a high sense of belonging. Later studies inferred that the attraction of the entire group led to group cohesiveness, which is reminiscent of social identity theory (Glasford & Johnston, 2018; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to Glasford and Johnston (2018), group cohesiveness is based on social attraction, which refers to the attraction between members of a significant social group. Prior research indicated that individuals' simi-

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larities in background, attitudes, values, and personality traits are related to group cohesiveness (Van Swol & Kane, 2019; Hambrick et al., 2018). And from the perspective of social attraction, the similarity between group members is that individuals divide themselves and others into ingroup and outgroup, which serves as the basis for group cohesiveness (Glasford & Johnston, 2018; Goh et al., 2019).

For a long time, people have a comprehensive negative evaluation of the "black sheep", and social scientists' explanation of black sheep effect has been mostly discussed in psychological factors. However, black sheep effect occurs frequently in our lives, especially in the workplace, but few studies mention the connection between the black sheep effect and the business management field. Therefore, this study aims to use the perspective of social psychology to explore the positive contribution of "black sheep" to the organization and to propose that the existence of the black sheep effect has a positive impact on group development.

Literature Review and Proposition Development

Black Sheep Effect.

The black sheep effect proposed by Marques et al. (1988) indicated that "Ingroup members were consistently evaluated in a more extreme way than outgroup members, either favorably or unfavorably" (p.12), and two different reactions of the ingroup favoritism effect and the black sheep effect were explained. When the black sheep effect is confirmed, the theoretical basis is the same as the ingroup favoritism effect. Both effects were applied the social identity theory as the basis for development. The black sheep effect can be categorized as the expansion of ingroup favoritism effect. According to the social identity theory, if an organization can change the self-identity of members in the group, it can also change the behavior of the individual, and the reason for the change is the member's cognition and emotional attachment to the group. (Pan et al., 2019; Nason et al., 2018).

Due to the limitations of social identity theory, Haslam et al. (1999) developed a self-categorization theory. The theory assumes that the self can be categorized at various levels of abstraction. In other words, humans may categorize the self as a singular "I" (personal identity), or as a more inclusive "we" (social identity). The social identity theory explains why members of the ingroup are not more positive or negative about the ingroup target. Because when the correlation between the members of the group is higher, raising the group value by giving positive evaluation to the ingroup target also improves the social identity-ingroup favoritism theory. Conversely, when the characteristics of the target are clearly negative, he or she threatens the social identity of the members of the group, so the members chooses to exclude or isolate the target and eliminate the negative impact of the target on the group-black sheep effect. Marques et al. (1988) indicated that the interaction between the ingroups is stronger than the outgroup, and black sheep effect occurs when the judgment characteristics of the target are related to social identity.

Group Cohesiveness.

Previous studies have indicated that most researchers define group cohe-

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siveness as the task commitment and attraction (Lata & Kamalanabhan, 2005). And the cohesiveness among the members of the group stems from the members' high sense of belonging to the group and the attraction of the whole group.

Lott and Lott (1965) believed that the attraction of group cohesiveness can be explained by interpersonal attraction, that is, when team members have positive emotions with each other, there will form group cohesiveness. Later studies inferred that the attraction of the entire group led to group cohesiveness, and it is based on social attraction, which refers to the attraction between members of a significant social group (Hogg, 1992). Hogg (1992) explained that team cohesion is developed by social attraction and self-categorization theory, and individuals will psychologically classify themselves as internal or external members of the group, through drawing similarities and differences between others. Social attraction refers to the individual's love and identity to the whole group, rather than the interpersonal attraction proposed (Hogg, 1992; Hogg, 1993). In other words, individuals will distinguish between others and their own through the four components of social perception - observation, attribution, integration and confirmation (Aronson et al, 2010), and have an overall identity for the ingroup, which is reminiscent of Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, "the evaluation of the group is regarded as their own value". In addition, task commitment is another important element in forming group cohesiveness. Sports and organizational theorists point out that the commitment of group members to accomplish team tasks and achieve organizational goals creates cohesiveness (Guzzo, 1995). Such group

will have strong interdependence and be responsible for the results of the team's work. This will result in group cohesiveness among the members through the goal of accomplishing the task together (Beal et al, 2003).

Proposition 1: black sheep effect is positively related to group cohesiveness

According to the development background and literature review of the black sheep effect and group cohesiveness, this study consider that the black sheep effect has a positive relationship with group cohesiveness. Black sheep effect is a rigorous evaluation and exclusion behavior of ingroup members for the ingroup target, that is, the behavior of the ingroup members in order to make the entire group's social value not depreciate. By giving negative evaluation to separate the target who has a negative impact on the group from the entire group to maintain the consistent identity and value of the group. At the same time, these behaviors also bring the relationship between themselves and the group closer. In other words, it is the pursuit of belonging and security.

The development of black sheep effect, in addition to the extension of the partial ingroup favoritism effect, its theoretical prototype is derived from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The application of the theory in the group indicates that the members will have a holistic identity to the whole group and that their value is closely related to the whole group. Bringing this application to the cohesiveness of the group is similar to Hogg's view of group cohesiveness.

Team cohesion can be explained by social attraction and self-categorization

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theory (Hogg, 1992). Social attraction refers to the individual's love and identity for the whole group (Croes et al., 2019). Self-categorization theory states that individuals will classify themselves into "personal identity" and "social identity" at the psychological level and further classify the similarities and differences between members, and partition the ingroup and outgroup. (Chatman & Spataro, 2005). The group cohesiveness is therefore formed. In addition, black sheep effect shows that group members' more stringent evaluation target are not only to eliminate negative impacts and maintain group consistency, but also to strengthen the closeness between members and thus pursue sense of belonging (Marques et al., 1992).

Through the above discussion, the core theory and application of the black sheep effect and group cohesiveness are consistent. Therefore, this study concluded that the black sheep effect has a positive correlation with group cohesiveness.

Group Development.

Among the various group development studies, the most influential research is the Tuckman's stages of group development, including forming, storming, norming and performance (Tuckman, 1965). And he added the fifth stage to these four stages in the later research-adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). In Tuckman and Jensen's stages group development, the first three stages are closely related to interpersonal relationships and group relationships.

The first stage is the forming, and this process is to form a dependency and dependence between the members. So when the group is at this stage, the main task is to eliminate the uncertainty and fear that arises when members join this group. The second stage is the storming, and the interpersonal relationship problem is the most important unstable factor at this stage. At this point, team members will face problems caused by differences of opinion and personality conflicts between members. Tuckman mentioned in the discussion that some groups will have long-term stalemate between members due to factors such as values, personality, opinions, etc., and thus cannot enter the next stage (Tuckman, 1965). In other words, not all groups can pass the storming to enter the norming. The main goal of this stage is to make team members willing to express their ideas and build a sense of trust and belonging among within the group. After the team passed the storming and entered the norming, the members resolved their differences and personality conflicts, which created a greater sense of intimacy and formed a spirit of cooperation (Tuckman, 1965). There is a strong sense of identity and belonging between the members at this stage, and will focus again on work tasks and team goals. Compared with the previous stage, the emotions of tension and anxiety have fallen sharply, so the work performance will be better. During this period, the team's culture and influence are more intense, and individuals will have a sense of self-esteem and security for the entire group.

Proposition 2: group cohesiveness is positively related to group development

Through reviewing the relevant literature on group cohesiveness and group development, group cohesiveness has an important influence in promoting group development. The first three stages of group development that Tuckman and

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Jensen described in their research are related to the procedure of individual adaptation to the whole group. Hogg (1992) defined the attraction of group cohesiveness as illustrated by social attraction and self-categorization theory. Substituting his argument into Tuckman and Jensen's group development reveals that individuals in the group are gradually shifting from the "personal identity" of the forming period to the "social identity" of the norming period. Moreover, according to the social attraction theory, members will have a holistic identity with the internal groups, that is, they will link their own values with the group values (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; Haslam et al, 1999).

In addition, in Tuckman and Jensen's group development, as the group progressed from the storming period to the norming period, the team reduced interpersonal pressure and membership differences, so the members' work concentration will be greatly improved. It is another component of group cohesiveness -task commitment. The commitment of team members to complete team tasks and achieve organizational goals creates cohesiveness (Guzzo, 1995). Such groups will have strong interdependence and be responsible for the team's work. Through the goal of accomplishing the task together, group cohesiveness will be generated among the members (Beal et al, 2003).

Based on the above discussion, comparing the group cohesiveness with Tuckman and Jensen's group development indicated that the improvement of group cohesiveness will make the team have a greater chance to pass the storming period into the norming period, and the interpersonal interaction and work performance will be greatly improved.

Therefore, this study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between group cohesiveness and group development.

Conclusion

This study aims to provide organizational and group leaders an article exploring the workplace bullying caused by black sheep effect from the perspective of social psychology, and to discuss the relationship between black sheep effect and business management field. Analyze whether these phenomena have a positive contribution to the group or organization from an organizational perspective.

After the discussion in the previous sections, in the first proposition, we found that there are two main parts of the relationship between black sheep effect and group cohesiveness. The first part is the researches on social identity theory and self-categorization theory, which explains the group phenomenon with social identity value and group identity. The second part is the phenomenon of gathering and crowding out within the group caused by social attraction and sense of belonging. It is speculated from the above two major points that black sheep effect will have a positive impact on group cohesiveness.

In the second proposition, we consider that the theory of group cohesiveness and group development has two elements. The first is the association between group identity and self-value as mentioned in self-categorization theory and social attraction. The second is the task commitment, which illustrates the formation of cohesiveness in the group and its important application in group development. From the above two points,

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there is a significant positive relationship between group cohesiveness and group development.

Based on the above, this study demonstrates that black sheep effect will enable the group to enter the work-oriented stage more quickly and accelerate group development through the establishment of group cohesiveness.

This study refers to the contribution of the existence of black sheep to the group or organization, but in any case, workplace bullying is definitely not the right behavior. For the leader, only by understanding the reasons behind the emergence of workplace bullying, it is possible to eliminate such things and find solutions. This is also the impact that this study hopes to bring, and to encourage people to analyze and solve problems in a more rational way rather than shirking responsibility or punishing the litigant.

In future work, the research attempts to propose a negative impact of black sheep effect on team management and speculates on the solution and the main points of prevention. It is hoped that the research will provide more different contributions to this topic.

Acknowledgement

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