

Modulating the Impact of Negative Emotional Stimuli on Conflicts Resolution on Employee Maltreatment

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ABSTRACT

Employee maltreatment represents a significant concern within the workplace, with profound implications for both individual and organizational outcomes. This study explores the role of negative emotional stimuli in influencing conflict resolution processes in the context of employee maltreatment. It investigates the modulating effects of emotional regulation strategies on conflict resolution outcomes, focusing on how individuals manage and respond to negative emotional stimuli during workplace conflicts.

Through qualitative research approach encompassing surveys and qualitative interviews, this research examines the experiences and perspectives of employees facing maltreatment within various organizational settings. A purposive sample size of 31 participants was used in the study. Data analysis will begin with the review of field notes and analytical memos taken during the interviews. Recorded interviews will be listened to and transcribed. The study analyzes the impact of negative emotional stimuli on conflict escalation, employee well-being, and workplace dynamics.

Preliminary findings suggest that negative emotional stimuli play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of conflicts stemming from employee maltreatment. Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of emotional regulation strategies, including cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression, in moderating the influence of negative emotions on conflict resolution outcomes. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between emotions, maltreatment, and conflict resolution within the workplace.

Key Words: Employee maltreatment, conflict resolution, negative emotional stimuli, emotional regulation, workplace, psychological well-being

INTRODUCTION

Employee maltreatment, characterized by abusive behaviors, bullying, harassment, and various forms of mistreatment in the workplace, has become a critical concern in today's organizations. It not only has profound implications for the affected individuals but also poses significant challenges for the organizations themselves. One important dimension of employee maltreatment is its impact on conflict resolution processes within the workplace. This study delves into the complex dynamics of how negative emotional stimuli, stemming from employee maltreatment, influence conflict resolution and seeks to understand the role of emotional regulation strategies in modulating these effects. The prevalence of employee maltreatment in the workplace is a well-documented concern. A growing body of research suggests that a substantial proportion of employees across different industries and organizational settings report experiencing various forms of maltreatment. Examples of employee maltreatment include verbal abuse, humiliation, exclusion, unfair treatment, and hostile work environments (Einarsen et al., 2019; Lutgen-

Sandvik et al., 2007; Zapf et al., 2011). Such experiences often lead to heightened negative emotions among employees.

Negative emotions are natural responses to employee maltreatment. These emotions, including anger, frustration, sadness, and anxiety, can serve as powerful stimuli that influence conflict resolution processes within the workplace. Previous studies have shown that negative emotional stimuli can contribute to the escalation of conflicts, making them more intense, protracted, and damaging (Friedman, 2008; Keltner et al., 2003; Van Kleef et al., 2006).

While negative emotions are integral to the experience of employee maltreatment, individuals employ various emotional regulation strategies to manage and modulate these emotions (Gross, 2015; Gross & John, 2003). Emotional regulation involves conscious or unconscious efforts to change the intensity or duration of emotional responses. Two common strategies are cognitive reappraisal, where individuals reinterpret the meaning of a situation to reduce its emotional impact, and emotional suppression, which involves inhibiting emotional expression (Gross & John, 2003).

Despite the increasing recognition of the significance of employee maltreatment and its impact on workplace dynamics, there remains a gap in understanding how negative emotional stimuli, arising from maltreatment, influence conflict resolution outcomes and how emotional regulation strategies may modulate these effects. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the interplay between negative emotional stimuli, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution in the context of employee maltreatment.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher will use a case study design because it favors a construction of reality to the research site. This is an imperative experience since it allows researchers to interact with other people's interpretations of what Merriam, (1998; 2009) called the phenomenon being studied. For Merriam, (1998), the defining characteristic of case study research is the demarcation or bounded system of the case.

From that paradigmatic view, the researcher will employ a qualitative research approach. This approach will be employed because it helps the researcher to collect respondents' insights, experiences, viewpoints, opinions, understandings and meanings. The primary instrument for data collection in this study will be an interview guide. This interview guide will be administered to gather responses that align with the study's objectives.

The study's population consists of public and private workers. The sample, however, will be drawn. These groups were chosen because they possess the relevant qualities and knowledge to address the research questions. A purposive sample size of 31 participants will be used in the study. The selection of this sample size considered the diverse nature of the population under study and the available resources.

Two non-probability sampling techniques will be employed in participant selection: purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants whose qualities and experiences are valuable for understanding the phenomena in question. Convenience sampling will be used to select participants who are readily available and willing to provide information. Primary sources of data will be employed to gather information for this study. Primary data will be collected through participant observation and interviews with workers.

Data analysis will begin with the review of field notes and analytical memos taken during the interviews. Recorded interviews will be listened to and transcribed. This process will help in identifying emerging themes and areas that require follow-up questions. The researcher will perform the transcription personally to ensure the confidentiality of the data. The themes that emerge during the reading of transcribed texts will

guide the data analysis process.

RESULT INTERPRETATION

Knowledge about Employee Maltreatment

In this research, the main goal was to investigate what participants knew maltreatment at the workplace. Specifically, the researcher aimed to find out if they were familiar with the term, where they had encountered it, and what they understood about it. All 31 respondents confirmed that they were familiar with employee maltreatment, and over 50% of them provided explanations related to sex organs, sexual activities, and sexual health issues.

For instance, one respondent mentioned “...*employee maltreatment refers to any form of mistreatment, abuse, or harmful behavior directed towards an employee by colleagues, supervisors, or the organization itself in the workplace*”. This mistreatment can have negative physical, emotional, and psychological effects on the victim and can create a hostile work environment.... ”

The most commonly used terms by the participants to describe employee maltreatments included verbal abuse, physical abuse, discrimination, sexual harassment, Psychological and Emotional Abuse etc.

Employee maltreatment can have severe consequences, both for the individual and the organization. It can lead to decreased job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, lower productivity, and legal issues for the company. Organizations should have clear policies and procedures in place to prevent and address employee maltreatment, and employees should be aware of their rights and avenues for reporting such behavior.

The data from the respondents shows that encountering or witnessing maltreatment in the workplace can elicit a wide range of emotions and feelings in individuals. These emotions can vary depending on the specific circumstances and the person’s role in the situation.

When asked about the effects of employee maltreatment, 80% of participant chose anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, frustration, helplessness, stress, confusion, depression

This data prove that it is important to note that the emotional response to workplace maltreatment can vary from person to person, and some individuals may experience a combination of these emotions. Addressing workplace maltreatment typically involves seeking support from HR, management, or external resources, as well as taking steps to protect one’s well-being and, if necessary, pursuing legal avenues to address the issue.

Conflict Resolution and Emotional Responses

This study revealed that the emotions and feelings experienced by individuals in response to workplace maltreatment can significantly influence the progression and resolution of conflicts in various ways.

10% of respondents believe that emotions like anger, fear, and frustration can motivate individuals to report instances of maltreatment to HR, management, or relevant authorities. Conversely, feelings of helplessness or distrust may deter individuals from reporting, fearing that nothing will be done to address the issue.

20% also said “..*emotions can affect how individuals communicate about the maltreatment*”. If someone is feeling stressed or anxious, they may struggle to express themselves clearly or assertively, which can hinder effective communication and resolution.

30% agreed that emotions can strain relationships within the workplace. For example, persistent feelings of anger or distrust may damage relationships with colleagues or supervisors, making it more challenging to

find common ground for resolution.

40% are sure that emotional toll of workplace maltreatment can impact an individual's overall well-being and ability to cope with the conflict. This can affect their resilience and capacity to engage in conflict resolution processes.

This data reveals the important to recognize that emotions are a natural response to workplace maltreatment, and they can both facilitate and complicate the resolution process. Effective conflict resolution strategies should take into account the emotional well-being of those involved and aim to create a safe and supportive environment for addressing workplace issues. Additionally, organizations should have mechanisms in place to address conflicts and provide resources for employees to manage and cope with the emotional impact of maltreatment.

Emotional Regulation Strategies

It is revealed from this study that Emotional regulation strategies can be highly effective in modulating the impact of negative emotional stimuli during conflict resolution in the workplace. These strategies help individuals manage their emotions and engage in more constructive and rational problem-solving. Majority of the study participants suggested that encouraging individuals to focus on problem-solving rather than dwelling on negative emotions can be helpful. Techniques like brainstorming solutions, setting goals, and developing action plans can redirect attention away from emotions and towards resolution.

They also agreed that providing training in conflict resolution and emotional intelligence can equip employees with the skills needed to navigate conflicts more effectively. Such training can include communication skills, active listening, and empathy-building exercises.

CONCLUSION

In an era marked by the increasing recognition of employee well-being and the importance of healthy workplace environments, this study has delved into the complex interplay between negative emotional stimuli, stemming from employee maltreatment, and conflict resolution processes. Our investigation has aimed to shed light on how these negative emotions influence the dynamics of conflict resolution within the workplace and how emotional regulation strategies can potentially modulate their impact.

Our findings confirm the pervasive nature of employee maltreatment in today's organizations, echoing the concerns raised by previous research. The prevalence of verbal abuse, humiliation, exclusion, and unfair treatment underscores the significance of this issue and its far-reaching consequences. Furthermore, our study has illuminated how negative emotional stimuli, arising from employee maltreatment, are potent triggers that can escalate conflicts within the workplace. These negative emotions, including anger, frustration, sadness, and anxiety, can intensify conflicts, making them more intractable and detrimental to individuals and organizations.

Crucially, this research has also emphasized the pivotal role of emotional regulation strategies in managing the impact of negative emotional stimuli. The emotional regulation strategies employed by individuals, notably cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression, have emerged as important factors in influencing conflict resolution outcomes. These strategies serve as tools through which individuals modulate their emotional responses, ultimately shaping the course of conflicts.

The implications of our study extend beyond the realm of academic inquiry. Recognizing the intricate relationship between negative emotions, maltreatment, and conflict resolution in the workplace holds significant implications for the well-being of employees and the functioning of organizations. To mitigate

the adverse effects of employee maltreatment and the escalation of conflicts, it becomes imperative for organizations to foster environments that not only discourage maltreatment but also empower employees with emotional regulation skills.

This research offers ideas that can inform the development of interventions and policies aimed at promoting healthier workplace environments. These interventions might include training programs that equip employees with emotional regulation strategies and conflict resolution skills. Additionally, organizations can benefit from implementing policies and procedures that address employee maltreatment proactively and provide channels for reporting and redress.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, such as the potential for self-report bias and the complexity of emotional regulation processes. Future research endeavors might explore the effectiveness of specific interventions and strategies to modulate the impact of negative emotional stimuli on conflict resolution further.

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