

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS WITH DIFFERENT ETHNIC NATIONALITIES AND THE COGNITIVE COMPONENT OF ETHNIC PREJUDICES OF EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to see the relationship between the perception of positive communication and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudices among public sector employees in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in the cities of Skopje, Tetovo and Gostivar in the Republic of North Macedonia. The participants in this study were a total of 194 employees with different ethnic affiliations: Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian, Vlach and Roma, aged 18 to 56 years, with an approximate inclusion of both sexes. The quantitative method and questionnaire technique were used for this research. Despite high confidence intervals, this study's findings highlighted a statistically non-significant prediction effect between positive communication and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice in employees. A non-significant effect was also found in the prediction of the manager's affiliation in the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice in employees.

Keywords: Cognitive component of ethnic prejudice, Positive communication, Manager's ethnicity.

INTRODUCTION

The addressed problem of this study is significant because it deals with a specificity of communication in organizations with different ethnic affiliations and positive communication concerning the cognitive component of ethnic prejudices among employees in the state sector, specifically in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. in the cities of Skopje, Tetovo and Gostivar in the Republic of North Macedonia. Seeing, in general, the other relevant studies that have studied the aspect of communication and ethnic prejudices in general, this study aims to give another scope of the problem by specifying the variables in order to find social problems within the work process. As a consequence of all this, the purpose of this study is to see the relationship between the perception of positive communication in an organization with different ethnicities and the cognitive component of the ethnic prejudices of the employees. Communication is one of the primary ways people structure themselves into the social systems we call work. Without the ability to communicate, contemporary organizations would cease to exist. Many researchers have agreed that the contribution of communication processes is a significant factor in organizational success (Snyder & Morris, 1984). Employees who have perceived positive communication of their upper etalon in organizations also have more positive attitudes toward other's ethnicity. According to Gray & Laidlaw (2004), employees who communicate well with managers are more likely to build effective work relationships with other employees with cultural diversity. Further, management's positive communication in an organization can increase the positive cognition component of attitudes by describing general goals and providing needed information that helps employees carry out their jobs and relationships with other colleagues (Allen, 1992).

Open systems theory is the first major conceptual framework to be described for understanding organizational communication. This theory involves considerable coordination and maintenance and describes five basic types of subsystems that develop in organizations: the productive, supportive, maintenance, adaptive and managerial (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

There is strong evidence who report us that effective communication, such as positive communication and open communication are positively related to employees' attitudes, prejudices and performance (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska & Gully, 2003; O'Reilly, 1977; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1977; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1979; Snyder & Morris, 1984). People who have excellent communication in their organization tend to have a positive attitude towards the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), have less intention to leave (Van Dick et al., 2004), are more satisfied with their job (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000), show more organizational citizenship behaviour (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Christ, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Van Dick, 2003; Feather & Rauter, 2004) and cooperate more intensively with other organizational members (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). According to Bartels et al. (2009) and the results of a longitudinal study, internal communication climate is essential for employees' stereotypes and identification with other ethnicities.

The cognitive component of prejudice is the beliefs (held by the person) about the value-attaining and value-blocking powers of the attitude object viewed as an instrumental agency. Negative relations between members of different ethnic groups are still a reality of social life. Therefore, effective real-world interventions are needed to reduce ethnic prejudice outside the work and thereby improve interethnic relations. According to Allport (1954), direct interactions between members of different groups can reduce prejudice. The contact theory points out that contact between groups is one of the most effective ways to reduce group prejudice. Being in constant contact, the two ethnic, racial, cultural, and other groups will develop the opportunity to get acquainted, eliminating prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination between them and creating a good interaction.

More than 50 years later, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found with a quantitative summary that face-to-face communication is negatively correlated with prejudice. On the other hand, there is also good reason to assume that contact, when organized positively, is effective even in these contexts.

Based on the conclusions and arguments of the studies presented above, this research's main hypothesis emphasizes a significant correlation between positive communication and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudices in organizations with different ethnic affiliations.

METHODOLOGY

The participants

This study includes employees of the state sector, specifically the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in the cities of Skopje, Tetovo and Gostivar. The sectors included in this research are the Employment Agency, Inspectorate, Pension Fund and Health Fund. The selection of subjects was based on the random method. There are a total of 194 participants, part of the lower echelon, where 92 (47%) subjects belong to the female gender and 102 (53%) of them to the male gender. Their average age is 37 years (min=18 years, max=56 years). The participation of the participants was voluntary, taking care to preserve their anonymity and comfort while completing the questionnaire.

Methods and procedures

The first questionnaire collects data on the perception of the effect of positive superior-subordinate communication as a variable that is thought to impact the cognitive component of female employees' prejudices. The original version of this inventory was compiled by Dennis (1974) and mainly consisted of 10 statements. Positive superior-subordinate communication is defined as the sum of the points obtained from the answers to each of the questions of this scale. Thus, it is with 1 (do not agree at all), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (completely agree). The same questionnaire was also used by the author Roberts (2013), Wright State University, in the United States of America, who addressed the impact of communication and communication channels on the organizational commitment of female employees. Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire for measuring positive communication, consisting mainly of 10 statements, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is a highly reliable value of $\alpha=0.94$.

Data on the report of the cognitive component of the ethnic prejudices of female employees were measured through the Universal Diversity Scale, an inventory compiled by Miville-Guzman, M-GUDS (1999), consisting mainly of 9 statements. The cognitive component of the ethnic prejudices of female employees is defined as the sum of the points obtained from the answers to the following statements: with 1 (not agree at all), with 2 (disagree), with 3 (neutral), with 4 (agree) and with 5 (completely agree). The cognitive component of M-GUDS prejudices has been shown to have a high reliability of $\alpha=0.846$. The same measurement scale was used by the author Salisbury (2011), who investigated the cognitive component of the prejudices of students who continued their studies in a spirit of diverse culture.

Data analysis

The SPSS statistical package, version 22, was used for the data analysis. First, the averages of the variables were presented. Then, the correlation of the variables between positive communication and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice was realized. At the same time, the prediction of the effects of positive communication ethnicity of the manager or supervisor on the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice was tested using multiple linear regression analysis.

RESULTS

Referring to the descriptive data from Table 1, the positive communication variable as a component of internal public communication results in an average of 36.61, very close to the expected average (Max=53, Min=13, DS=36.61), as well as the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice from the collected data turns out to be on average 34.43 lower than what is expected (Max=48, Min=13, DS=34.43).

Based on the results obtained from Pearson's correlation, where the relationship or dependence between the cognitive component of ethnic prejudices and positive communication as a component of internal public communication during the workplace was sought, the correlation value was found to be ($r=0.175$; $p < 0.05$), which shows that there is a very low positive correlation between the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice and positive communication, significant for degrees of freedom 0.05. This means that the growth of positive communication as a component of internal public communication affects, to a very low extent, the rise of the cognitive component of ethnic prejudices among female employees. The more the employees perceive the positive communication exercised by the leaders, the more likely it is that they will form positive cognitive schemes, information and recognition among other employees of a different ethnic origin.

Table 1. Means of variables and correlation between them

Variables	Mean	SD	Max	Min	Correlation	
					1	2
Positive communication	36,61	36,61	53	13	-	
Cognitive component	34,43	34,43	48	13	.175*	-

All correlations significant ($p < .05$). Max=maximum; Min=minimum; SE= standard deviation

Linear regression analysis was used to predict the impact of the cognitive component of employees based on positive workplace communication and the ethnicity of managers (Table 2). These findings show that the ethnicity of the manager is not a significant predictor of the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice ($b = .056$, $t = .752$, $p > .005$). Positive communication within work also appears as a non-predictive component of the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice ($b = .191$, $t = 2.571$, $p > .005$), with a non-statistically significant model [$F(2) = 3, 305$, $p > .005$, with $R^2 = .033$].

Table 2. Correlation between the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice, positive communication and the ethnicity of the manager/supervisor

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	b	std. error	beta		
(Constant)	29.221	2.336		12.511	.000
Ethnicity of manager/supervisor	.518	.689	.056	.752	.453
Positive communication	.119	.046	.191	2.571	.011

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive component of ethnic prejudice

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the purpose of this paper to see the relationship between the perception of positive communication in the organization with different ethnicities and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice, as well as the prediction of the ethnicity of the manager in the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice in employees, findings from multiple regression analysis resulted in a non-statistically significant pattern. Contrasting results from the findings of the paper in question have revealed the importance of the manager's communication with employees of different ethnic backgrounds in the cognitive component of their ethnic prejudices, suggesting the implementation and promotion of communication channels in order to institutionalize employees with the company in the long term (Maharani et al., 2022).

Based on the conclusions of Otten and Moskowitz (2000), where they emphasize that people automatically have a preference to communicate and interact with the same members of an ethnic group, connecting not only the emotional element but also the cognitive element of their ethnic prejudices, the data of the study in words based on the very low correlation value, but with a non-statistically significant regression model, show once again that the way of positive communication in the workplace does not affect the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice. Despite the findings of the study by Byrne (1961), where people intentionally become sensitive to other members in order to receive validation of their perceptions as a reward, this was not observed with the data from our study even when the ethnic sin of manager was measured as a predictor of the cognitive component of employees' ethnic prejudice. This can be justified by the fact that the manager's ethnicity was taken as a whole and was not measured separately for

each sub-ethnicity, with the employees' ethnicity and the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this paper are of great importance because they provide a theoretical contribution to inter-ethnic relations in the workplace, proving once again that positive communication does not affect the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice in employees. All this can result from employees' continuous commitment to the workplace, regardless of their communication within collegial or managerial relationships.

The next point of the study investigates the predictive effect of the ethnic sinfulness of the manager or supervisor on the cognitive component of ethnic prejudice in employees, considering that this moment can provoke the growth of this type of prejudice, but this report was not significant. These results again show compatibility with the findings of Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), that in those workplaces where there is clear and appropriate normative behaviour among employees, we do not have the presentation of ethnic prejudices.

Managerial Implications

The effect of this study provides some important insights into the managerial realm by relating the mode and type of communication at work and the cognitive component of ethnic bias at work, where managers can investigate this level of relationship to create a baseline against which they can monitor in the future, how these actions generate between employees and each other and their relationship with the company. This form of monitoring can detect fluctuations in this ratio and be alert for timely advice and intervention. Although the findings of this research showed that one of the forms of communication, such as positive communication, did not affect the ethnic prejudices of the employees, with a managerial monitoring tactic, different forms of hidden prejudices can be discovered.

This research has focused only on the type of cognitive component of ethnic prejudice, not including the behavioural and emotional components, and only on positive communication, not including other types of communication. Also, these memories were measured only in the state sector. Future research could thoroughly study these components by measuring them not only in the public sector but also in the private sector.

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