Understanding Harm Perception: The Impact of Social Safety Campaigns and

Organizational Identification

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Abstract

This study examines how exposure to social safety campaigns affects harm perception in ambiguous workplace situations and the moderating role of organizational identification. Through a vignette-based experiment with 102 participants, we tested the impact of social safety campaign exposure on perceived harm severity. The results showed that social safety campaign exposure did not significantly influence harm perception. However, strong organizational identification was associated with higher perceived harm severity in the exclusion vignette but not the outfit vignette. These findings suggest that while social safety campaigns alone may not alter harm perception, organizational identification plays a crucial role in how employees assess harm. The study highlights the need for high-quality, clear campaign messages and suggests further research into the differential impact of various types of harm and additional moderating and mediating factors.

Keywords: harm perception, social safety campaigns, organizational identification

Introduction

General overview

You might recognize the following slogan: 'click it or ticket'. This campaign and others like it have been used around the globe to promote seat belt use and to raise awareness about the safety benefits of wearing a seat belt. A meta-analysis by Hagenzieker et al. (1997) has demonstrated that safety campaigns such as 'click it or ticket' can increase long-term compliance by 13.7 percentage points. Given the success of the campaigns, researchers have started to think about how these campaigns could have a beneficial effect in other contexts, with one of them being the organizational context. Thus, organizations are increasingly adopting similar strategies to improve physical safety within the workplace (Clarke, 2007; Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Recently, the focus of these safety campaigns has expanded beyond physical safety, targeting psychological and social safety aspects as well.

While this shift has offered several benefits (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), it also brings around new challenges, particularly in handling ambiguous social safety situations in which it's unclear whether the event is harmful or safe. Ghosh & Ray (1997) conducted a study during which they investigated the relationship between ambiguity and risk perception. They found that ambiguity significantly enhances an individual's risk perception, which can influence individual harm assessment, potentially leading to an overestimation of harm. This heightened harm awareness, also known as harm salience, and the potential overestimation of harm severity highlight the difficulties that can become evident when implementing social safety campaigns.

Another challenge encompasses the importance of considering the effectiveness of these policies because the effectiveness can vary greatly depending on

their quality and the clarity with which they are communicated. Social safety policies have the power to both escalate and de-escalate ambiguous situations in an organizational setting by either lowering or heightening the perception of harm. In sum, it seems of importance to understand how social safety policies can have positive effects as well as adverse effects, depending on their quality and implementation. This remains a critical issue and deserves attention from both scholars and practitioners.

As organizations continue to navigate their way with social safety policies, it becomes important to consider the factors that influence how the policies are perceived and, equivalently, their effects. Central to this understanding is the role of values, both individual and organizational. Personal values guide individual decisions and actions, while organizational values direct behavior within the workplace (Schwartz, 1992; Arieli et al., 2020). When employees' personal values align with organizational values, known as organizational identification, it affects how they perceive and respond to social safety policies. In essence, the relationship between personal and organizational values through organizational identification offers a new approach to examining policy perception within the workplace.

The purpose of this research is to explore how social safety policies influence harm perception within the context of ambiguous social safety situations. Specifically, I'm interested in how exposure to these policies shapes employees' perceptions of potential harm. Furthermore, the potential moderating role of organizational identification will be assessed. This leads to the central research question: How does exposure to a social safety campaign influence participants' perceptions of harm in ambiguous situations and to what extent does organizational identification moderate this relationship? In this study, I will consider whether exposure to social safety campaigns (e.g., exposure vs. no exposure) and the degree of organizational

identification (e.g., high vs. low), influence employees' harm perceptions when facing ambiguous social safety situations.

Theoretical Foundation

A Closer Look at Harm Perception and its Importance

To understand how and why individuals respond to safety policies, a closer look at the reasons behind their perception of harm and how people perceive harm is necessary. Harm perception involves how people recognize, interpret and (emotionally) respond to situations with a possibility of harm and this perception is influenced by several mechanisms. Before explaining the importance of researching harm perception, it is essential to recognize that different individuals can arrive at different conclusions about what constitutes harm. This is because of individual differences in harm perception in factors such as cultural background (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), personal experiences (Brown et al., 2005) and psychological traits such as neuroticism (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2023). Although further exploration into these factors is beyond the scope of this thesis, they do highlight the existence of individual differences.

Understanding harm perception on a broader level is important because it influences factors such as policy effectiveness (Slovic, 1987), risk management (Slovic, 2000) and individual decision-making processes (Betsch et al., 2020). Harm perception impacts how individuals respond to safety campaigns and other preventive measures. Betsch et al. (2020) found evidence that higher perceived risk led to increased adoption of health behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, in several professional career-related fields such as finance, healthcare, and engineering, understanding how people perceive and respond to potential harm and risks is important for effective risk management (Slovic, 2000). Lastly, the success of safety policies relies on public perception of the associated risks and harms. It is evident that effective communication is essential for policies such as traffic laws and

workplace safety regulations and campaigns to be successful (Slovic, 1987). These reasons underscore why harm perception has a significant influence on society. They also highlight the importance of effective policymaking, which will be discussed in more detail in a later section. Next, we'll look at the cognitive mechanisms that could lead individuals to perceive a situation as harmful. An exploration of these mechanisms could help us to better understand the underlying processes that drive individuals' varied responses to harm on a broader level.

Mechanisms behind Social Safety Policies

Social safety policies play a crucial role in initiating harm salience within the workplace, a process in which the awareness of potential dangers is enhanced, affecting how employees perceive their environment (Pratto & John, 1991). This heightened awareness is largely a result of the mechanisms through which these policies operate, concept creep theory and negativity bias. Next, we'll discuss two mechanisms that can explain why social safety campaign exposure specifically can enhance the perception of harm severity: concept creep and negativity bias.

According to Haslam (2016), sensitivity to harm is growing in general, especially so in countries with predominantly a Western culture. It thereby seems important to research the reason behind this growing sensitivity and the factors and foundations that have caused this shift. Haslam attributes the reason of this shift to the 'concept creep theory' (Haslam, 2016). This theory states that the concept of harm progressively expands, meaning that more harm-related topics are being interpreted as harmful (Haslam et al., 2020). Haslam et al. (2020) identify two forms of concept creep: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal creep extends the concept to new phenomena, while vertical creep encompasses less severe phenomena, lowering the threshold for what is considered harmful.

While the benefits of this lowered threshold shouldn't be overlooked, such as the identification of harmful behaviour that otherwise would have been tolerated, the focus in this

thesis will be mainly on the disadvantages (Dakin et al., 2023). Understanding this balance is crucial because, although necessary sensitivity to harm is important, it must be carefully managed. There is a risk that overemphasizing this concept could lead to an exaggerated perception of severity, beyond what might be recognized without heightened awareness. This expansion of boundaries is especially problematic in ambiguous situations, as it can foster a workplace culture that is overly focused on risk aversion (Haslam et al., 2020). In conclusion, the exploration of harm perception from the perspective of concept creep theory highlights the delicate balance that needs to be maintained in sensitivity to harm within organizational settings. This is further exemplified by how priming individuals with warnings about potential harm causes them to perceive an ambiguous statement as harmful (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2023). The concept creep theory aligns with these findings by showing that an increased awareness and expanded definition of harm can lead to heightened perceptions of harm, even in ambiguous situations. Bleske-Rechek et al. (2023) conducted two studies which showed not only that harm perceptions are influenced by situational factors, such as priming, but also dispositional traits, like neuroticism, confirming that ambiguous harm is multi-faceted concept.

To contribute to this understanding, harm perception in ambiguous situations can be extended to the concept of microaggressions, which are often subtle and ambiguous by nature. Including the theory behind microaggressions in this section is crucial because they exemplify how expanded definitions of harm can affect interpersonal dynamics and perceptions in the workplace. Like ambiguous harm situations, the perception of microaggressions is influenced by both situational factors and dispositional traits (Lilienfeld, 2017), so one could argue that the same underlying mechanisms are at work for both ambiguous harm and microaggressions. Lilienfeld (2017) argues that both the context in which harm occurs and individual characteristics shape how harm is perceived and interpreted, emphasizing the importance of

the medium through which harm is communicated. One of the reasons why microaggressions can have such detrimental effects on harm perceptions is the subtle nature of them. This can be particularly damaging because microaggressions can be easily dismissed or overlooked by others, leading to feelings of isolation and helplessness in those who experience them (Freeman & Stewart, 2021).

However, it would be shortsighted not to address that the researches by Bleske-Rechek et al. (2023), Lilienfeld (2017) and Freeman & Stewart (2021) focused on the effect of harm on the individual directly rather than on the bystander, which is this study's primary interest and research design. Nevertheless, research indicates that differences in impact on victim and bystanders are not as big as researchers initially thought (Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995). Victims and bystanders share several similar responses to harm, suggesting that research findings on the effects of harm on victims could be generalizable to the harm perceptions of bystanders (Garbarino, 2001; Hazler, 1996).

The concept creep theory is not the only theoretical framework that has been used to explain heightened sensitivity to harm. Negativity bias is a term that has been used to describe the phenomenon that negative events lead to stronger evaluations of the stimulus compared to positive events of equal magnitude. Research suggests that this bias can significantly influence how individuals interpret ambiguous situations, often leading to a more negative initial response, which aligns with the scientific findings (Petro et al., 2018). When considering the implications of the two theoretical frameworks, negativity bias and concept creep theory, it is evident that these dynamics could shape responses to social safety campaigns within organizational settings. This is because these frameworks interact in a way that cause increased perception of harm severity in ambiguous situations.

In the context of social safety campaigns, discussing both concepts is relevant because they jointly explain why social safety policies can sometimes result in heightened perceptions of harm beyond what is rational or intended. Negativity bias might cause employees to focus more on the risks or dangers highlighted in safety campaigns, overshadowing the positive aspects and benefits. Similarly, concept creep may lead to an expanded definition of what constitutes harm, causing employees to perceive more situations as potentially harmful. This combination can create an environment where the perception of harm is amplified, leading to increased anxiety and risk aversion (Haslam et al., 2020). Both mechanisms make sure that employees are able to quickly notice potential harm, which can increase the perception of harm in situations with varying levels of harm. Although not intentionally, because social safety policies continually emphasize the presence of harm, Individuals become primed for an elevated state of alertness. This phenomenon, known as harm salience, is not just about recognizing real harmful situations, but also about how these situations are amplified by the mind's focus on negative outcomes (Cacioppo et al., 2014). This effect can be particularly pronounced in ambiguous situations where the risk is not clear, making it difficult for employees to assess the actual harm accurately. This section has offered two different mechanisms and therefore two potential explanations for the reason why exposure to social safety campaigns can increase the perception of harm severity. All of these considerations let to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1:

Social safety campaign exposure significantly influences perception of harm severity

Organizational Identification as a Moderator

This upcoming section seeks to explore the role of organizational identification in moderating the relationship between social safety campaign exposure and perception of harm severity. Organizational identification is essential in determining how individuals

internalize and react to organizational campaigns. Strong organizational identification can lead to varied harm perceptions, often aligning closely with organizational goals and values. P-O value fit, which influences organizational identification, further shapes these perceptions and responses. How motivation and job satisfaction are affected by discrepancies in P-O value fit will be examined, along with the psychological mechanisms, such as social identity theory, that explain these relationships.

Organizational values have a wide span of influence on different components of an organization and its critical processes. They are linked to organizational phenomena such as culture (Schein, 1985), identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), Socialization (Dose, 1997) and person-organization value fit (Cable & Edwards, 2004).

P-o value fit is particularly important in explaining organizational identification. Organizational identification is a psychological bond between the individual and organization with which the individual feels a strong, self-defining and cognitive connection (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Organizational identification is interconnected with p-o value fit. When looking further into the concept of p-o value fit, there seems to be universal acknowledgement about the importance of it to organizational psychology. Schneider describes it as, "so pervasive as to be one of, if not the dominant conceptual forces in the field" (Schneider, 2001). Having a strong p-o value fit has several benefits (Enoksen & Sandal, 2015), however, we should also consider the effects of a weak p-o value fit. Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) identified discrepancies in goals and motivation when employees had a weak p-o value fit, which lead to a reduced motivation and job satisfaction. It is therefore not very surprising that there has been a large interest in the fit between individuals and their organizational environment.

The alignment between personal and organizational values is essential for organizational identification, where employees internalize organizational values as part of

their own self-concept, enhancing their commitment and satisfaction (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Furthermore, discrepancies in this fit can lead to reduced motivation and job satisfaction, as individuals struggle to match their values with those of the organization (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Thus, p-o value fit not only predicts but actively shapes organizational identification, suggesting that both individual and organizational outcomes could get influenced.

Before delving further into the implications this insight offers for this thesis, we should look at which psychological mechanism could explain this relationship. Social identity theory offers a valuable insight when trying to answer this question. This theory proposes that individuals' identities that originate from a group membership or category, are essential for their self-concepts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals can be part of multiple categories. Not only the number of memberships and which categories an individual identifies with can be subject to great variation, but also the level of identification with a specific group. This variability has great implications for organizational identification. An individual's organization is one of the key groups where the level of identification plays a crucial role and has several important consequences for both organization and employees (Boros, 2008). It has been theorized that organizational identification positively influences the level of effective functioning (Fuller et al., 2006) and employee compliance with organizational change (van Dijk & van Dick, 2009).

Another effect of a strong p-o fit, is that employees are more likely to act in accordance with the organization's desires and goals (Dutton et al., 1994). However, the downside of this should not be overlooked. Chen et al. (2016) established a link between organizational identification and unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB), with moral disengagement as a mediator. Even though the consequences and implications of UPB go beyond the scope of this thesis, the idea of generalizing Chen et al.'s (2016)

findings to a context where potential harmful behaviour isn't necessarily meant to contribute to the organization's success, seems to be worthwhile. Chen et al. (2016) argue that when individuals strongly identify with their organization, they are likely to shut off their moral self-regulatory processes that would normally suppress the unethical behaviour. This insight is particularly relevant in ambiguous harmful situations. When organizational identification is strong, employees might downplay the severity of harm or fail to act against it to protect the organization's image and align with perceived organizational values. This can lead to a minimized perception of harm and a reluctance to address harmful behaviors, especially if these behaviors are not clearly detrimental to the organization's success and goals (Conroy et al., 2017). Understanding this dynamic can provide valuable insights into how organizational identification influences employee perceptions and actions in the face of potential harm.

From this understanding, we can construct two hypotheses that address the interplay between organizational identification, harm perception, and harm salience:

Hypothesis 2:

Organizational identification is significantly related to perceived harm severity.

Hypothesis 3

Organizational identification moderates the relationship between social safety campaign exposure and perceived harm severity, such that high levels of organizational identification lead to lower perceptions of harm severity.

Methods

Procedure

The ethical committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences approved the study at the University of Groningen. For the purpose of this study, 6 bachelor thesis students collected data together in one Qualtrics questionnaire. The participants were recruited through

personal networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn, where the questionnaire was posted with a uniform message, and through Prolific, using funding allocated to the thesis group by the faculty. The participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with participants having the freedom to decline or withdraw from the study at any time. It took about 10 minutes to complete the survey. We obtained their informed consent at the beginning of the study. Next, the participants were asked to provide socio-demographic information, such as their gender, age, political ideology, work status and experience. Before completing the survey, participants were informed about the aim of the study, its procedure and potential outcomes. Participants were told that the study intended to examine how people perceive different kinds of workplace interactions, and how individual differences or personality characteristics influence those perceptions. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their responses. Upon completing the survey, participants were debriefed and were given a chance to reflect on their participation in the study. They were also asked to indicate if they confirm their consent, or if they prefer to rescind it.

Participants

In total, we recruited 227 participants. We were able to recruit 157 participants through our personal networks and 70 participants through Prolific. Next, 51 participants were excluded by the thesis supervisor due to unfinished answers or not giving consent. Out of these, 85 are women, 88 are men and 3 preferred not to identify themselves. The mean age was 30.01, with a standard deviation of 12.50. Because of the thesis' main interest in organizational identity, it was decided to exclude participants who are students ($n = 50$) and participants who are neither a student or an employee ($n = 12$). We also included an attention check, which led to the exclusion of 12 participants. Specifically, individuals who answered fewer than 2 out of 3 attention-check questions correctly, were excluded from the study. Analyses were conducted on the data obtained from the remaining 102 participants.

Research design

The study employed a vignette-based, single-time, online experimental design with organizational identification as the moderator variable to test whether social safety campaign exposure caused individuals to perceive more severe levels of harm. By random assignment, participants were either allocated to an experimental or a control group. In the experimental group, participants first read an Instagram post containing messages regarding unsafe social behavior in the workplace. Participants were told that the Instagram post was created as part of a social safety campaign implemented by a consulting firm. This was done to maximize ecological validity. Exposure or no exposure had no influence on what kind of questionnaire the participants received. This remained the same for both groups. While many variables were measured, I only considered harm perception and organizational identification.

Manipulation of Social Safety Campaign Exposure

The posters were designed in the typical square format of Instagram posts, as the social media platform is a realistic channel that institutions use to spread social safety campaigns (figure 1). Both the layout and the content of the fictitious campaign are inspired by the "Just Ask" poster campaign launched by the University of Groningen in April 2023 (University of Groningen, 2023). The slogans stand out in white lettering against a red background, which gives them a warning appearance at first glance. The aim of the campaign is to make people aware of the potential harm that may arise from social interactions ("Words can hurt"; "Didn't mean it?") and to define organizational norms of behavior ("Stand firm, speak out"; "Don't ignore the signals"). The two posters pointing out the potential harm of social interactions contain speech bubbles with examples of interactions that can be hurtful even without malicious intent. This makes it clear to the recipient which ambiguous forms of harmful behavior the campaign is targeting. The key message here is that harm can result from verbal interactions and that the assessment of this harm is in the eye of the beholder and

does not depend on bad intentions. The other two posters entail standards of behavior and

direct calls to action. They point out the individual's responsibility to recognize and address

inappropriate behavior.

Figure 1

Posters for the Social Safety Campaign

Participants were instructed to consider the goals of the campaign and reflect on how

effectively it communicates its message and engages its audience. They were also asked to

briefly summarize the main message of the campaign in the designated place. Participants in

the control condition were not exposed to such a poster, or any other messages.

Vignettes

Participants in both experimental and control conditions were then exposed to two

workplace vignettes in which the social harm is meant to be ambiguous (Figure 2).

Developing and using two vignettes increases the external validity as it allows for the

examination of reactions to different scenarios. The vignettes were designed as WhatsApp

messages to increase the similarity to real-life digital interactions. WhatsApp is a very popular

message exchange platform and it's very likely that the participants are familiar with it. This

potentially contributes to making the vignettes more relatable and realistic. It also makes the

vignettes accessible for a broader population. Both vignettes are based on workplace issues that should be familiar to most participants. In the first vignette, participants were asked to read an interaction among four employees, who work together at a large consulting firm. In the second vignette, participants were asked to read a text conversation between a manager and a team member. Themes such as (in)appropriate workplace compliments and inclusion or exclusion are intended to touch upon themes that participants are very likely to have been exposed to already. This ensures familiarity and increases the chance of getting genuine responses.
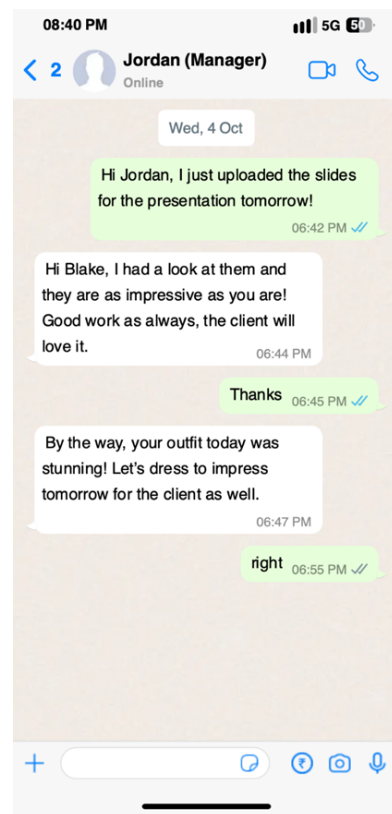
Figure 2a

Exclusion Vignette

Figure 2b

Outfit Comment Vignette

Several components have been incorporated into the vignettes to optimize ambiguity in both. Firstly, the vignettes were designed in a way that leaves room for interpretation. For instance, in the first vignette, the simple reply 'right' was added as a last statement to create

an open-ended conclusion. This way, the participants are invited to make their own

conclusions about how harmful the behavior in the vignette is. Secondly, through the use of

WhatsApp messages, participants are not able to read body language and facial expressions.

This way participants are required to rate intent and tone from text alone. Furthermore, the

vignettes have been designed in a way that the harm is not overly explicit. For example, in the

second vignette, the exclusion is communicated casually, which could be perceived as either

innocent or as deliberate exclusion. Lastly, gender-neutral names were included in both

vignettes to lessen the effect of gender bias on the participants' responses and to simplify the

study's design.

After familiarizing themselves with each vignette, participants were instructed to

answer a set of questions measuring the dependent variables of this study. These are in no

particular order moral outrage, intention to punish the perpetrator and perceived severity of

the harm inflicted on the teammate. Finally, the mediating variables were measured, which

were general political ideology (without information about voting), neuroticism, empathetic

concern, availability bias, moral identity and organizational identification.

Measures

Severity of harm

Participants were asked how much harm they thought the person in each vignette

experienced by rating it on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'no harm at all' to 6 'a great

deal of harm'. This was adapted from Dakin et al. (2023) by our supervisor.

Organizational identification

Organizational identity was measured by a 12-item questionnaire adapted from Park

and Back (2020). Participants were asked questions such as 'I am proud to be an employee of

my company' and 'my company's image in the community represents me well'. They were

asked to rate how much these statements were consistent with their beliefs on a 7-point Likert

scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'. Cronbach's alpha was 0.96. The

scale was initially adapted so that participants who are not an employee could be included too.

Participants were asked questions such as 'I am proud to be a student at my

university/institution' and 'my university/institution's image in the community represents me

well'. However, as said before, I decided to exclude this group due to a small sample size and

because it is not the main interest of this study.

Results

The results are organized by hypothesis testing rather than by each vignette separately.

By presenting the hypotheses first and then unfolding the results across both vignettes, the

structure allows for a clearer comparison and understanding of the effects observed in

different vignettes. All data analyses were completed using the statistical package IBM SPSS

Statistics 29.0. Descriptive statistics for the study variables, including sample size, minimum,

maximum, means, and standard deviations for perceived harm severity and organizational

identification, are presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. A paired samples t-test was

conducted to compare the perceived harm severity between the exclusion vignette and the

outfit vignette, the results indicated that the perceived harm severity was significantly higher

for the exclusion vignette (M = 2.294, SD = 1.943) compared to the outfit vignette ($t(101)$ =

11.927, $p < .001$). This indicates that the participants generally perceived the exclusion

vignette as more harmful than the outfit vignette.

Table 1

Sample Size, Minimum, Maximum, Means and standard deviations for the Exclusion Vignette

Condition		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Control	Severity of Harm	57	1.00	7.00	5.37	1.384
Campaign Exposure	Severity of Harm	45	2.00	7.00	5.47	1.179

Table 2

Sample Size, Minimum, Maximum, Means and Standard Deviations for the Outfit Vignette

Condition		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Control	Severity of Harm	57	1.00	7.00	3.02	1.695
Campaign Exposure	Severity of Harm	45	1.00	7.00	3.24	1.798

Table 3

Sample Size, Minimum, Maximum, Means and Standard Deviations for the Moderating Variable

Condition		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Control	Organizational Identification	57	1.75	7.00	4.65	1.268
Campaign Exposure	Organizational Identification	44	1.00	7.00	4.44	1.643

Assumption Checks

Several assumption checks were conducted for the organizational identification questionnaire to ensure the validity and reliability of the tests used. It has been decided to combine the manipulation checks of both vignette due to their likeness. This means that the assumption checks have been performed simultaneously for both vignettes. To test whether the residuals are normally distributed, a residual plot was generated. This indicated that the errors were normally distributed for both vignettes. A scatterplot of standardize residuals versus standardize predicted values showed a random distribution, implying that there's homoscedasticity and linearity. Next, no significant outliers were found after examination of Cook's distance and the boxplots (no Cook's distance larger than 1). Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) which was within acceptable limits for both vignettes (1.006< 4).

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that social safety campaign exposure would significantly influence perception of harm severity. A simple linear regression analysis indicated that exposure to the campaign did not have a significant effect on perceived harm severity for the outfit vignette $(F(1,100)=.427, p=.515)$. The R^2 .004, indicating that social safety campaign exposure explained approximately .4% of the variance in the perceived harm severity. There was also no significant effect of social safety campaign exposure on perceived harm severity for the exclusion vignette $(F(1,100)=.144, p=.705)$. The R^2 .001, indicating that social safety campaign exposure explained approximately .1% of the variance in the perceived harm severity. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that organizational identification would be a significantly related to perceived harm severity. A simple linear regression analysis indicated that organizational identification did not significantly affect perceived harm severity for the outfit vignette ($F(1,99)=.039$, $p=.843$). The R^2 .000, indicating that social safety campaign exposure explained 0% of the variance in the perceived harm severity. There was a significant effect on perceived harm severity for the exclusion vignette ($F(1,99)=6.776$, $p=.01$). The R^2 .064, indicating that social safety campaign exposure explained approximately 6.4% of the variance in the perceived harm severity. Specifically, higher levels of organizational identification were associated with greater perceived harm severity in the exclusion vignette. This suggests that individuals who strongly identify with their organization tend to perceive exclusion-related behaviors as more harmful. Thus, Hypothesis 2 only shows support for the exclusion vignette and not for the outfit vignette.

Hypothesis 3

The "PROCESS" macro, model 1, v4.2 (Hayes, 2013) was used to perform a moderator analysis. It was tested whether organizational identification moderated the relationship between social safety campaign exposure and perceived harm severity. The interaction effect is not significant for both the outfit vignette ($b=.013$, $SE=.248$, $t(97)$ .05, $p=.957$) and the exclusion vignette ($b=.110$, $SE=.178$, $t(97)$ .621, $p=.536$). This means that organizational identification does not significantly moderate the relationship between social safety campaign exposure and perceived harm severity, which leads to the conclusion that hypothesis 3 was not supported.

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Discussion

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This study aimed to explore how exposure to social safety campaigns influences employees' perceptions of harm severity in ambiguous situations and how the strength of

employees' identification with their organization can influence the degree to which social safety campaigns affect their perception of harm severity. The results derived from our dataset provided some insights, but the hypotheses were mostly not supported. Hypothesis 1, which proposed that social safety campaign exposure would significantly influence the perception of harm severity, was not supported for either the exclusion or outfit vignettes. In other words, exposure to social safety campaigns was not associated with perceptions of harm severity in these vignettes. Hypothesis 2 suggested that organizational identification would be significantly related to perceived harm severity. This hypothesis was partially supported, indicating that higher organizational identification was related to lower perceived harm severity in the exclusion vignette, but not for the outfit vignette, where organizational identification did not influence perceived harm severity. Finally, Hypothesis 3 suggested that organizational identification moderates the relationship between social safety campaign exposure and perceived harm severity. This hypothesis was also not supported for either vignette, meaning that the level of organizational identification did not change the effect of social safety campaign exposure on perceived harm severity.

Before looking at the limitations, practical implications and future directions, we should take a look at how we can connect the theoretical foundation from the introduction to the results from this study. Firstly, the finding that in this study, social safety campaign exposure alone does not alter perception of harm severity suggest that simply being exposed to campaign messages is not enough to change employees' perceptions of ambiguous situations. This result supports the idea that the quality and clarity of designing these campaigns is of importance (Clarke, 2007; Dollard & Bakker, 2010). This research highlights that for safety campaigns to effectively influence employees' perceptions, they must be clear and well-structured. In ambiguous situations, where the perception of harm is not straightforward, the clarity and quality of the social safety campaign become even more

crucial in ensuring that the intended safety messages are understood and internalized by the employees.

Secondly, the observation of differences in significance between the outfit vignette and exclusion for hypothesis 2 seems to be interesting and deserves further attention. A possible explanation for this difference is that exclusion is considered as a more direct form of harm whereas commenting on one's outfit might not be on the same level of harm severity. This is further supported by the study's findings, which show that the mean score of harm severity was much higher for the exclusion vignette, regardless of the condition. The concept creep theory (Haslam, 2010) could also explain this discrepancy, because it explains why more subtle forms of harm, for example exclusion, are now considered as harmful. This raises the question why some harm-related concepts do have expanding boundaries and why others don't as much. This might be an interesting issue to look into, as it could provide insights into how societal changes influence the perception of different types of harm and the effectiveness of social safety campaigns in addressing them.

Lastly, the link between organizational identity and perception of harm severity for the exclusion vignette deserves some attention on its own without being compared to the non-significant effect for the outfit vignette. The results of this study for this vignette suggest that stronger organizational identification could lead to higher perception of harm severity. This could possibly be explained by social identity theory where strong levels of identification can make employees more salient to behaviours that threaten the norms and values of their organization (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This increased sensitivity can motivate employees to react more strongly after witnessing behaviour that is threatening to the organization and even potentially drive unethical pro-social behaviours to support the organization. Even though this thesis has not definitively proven this last statement, it is definitely an interesting perspective to approach organizational identification and perceived harm severity with. These findings fit

with previous named theories by highlighting that strong organizational identification not only increases employees' alignment with organizational values but also increases their vigilance against perceived threats to these values.

Limitations

This thesis has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the thesis only had one dependent variable to measure the effect of social safety campaign exposure on harm perception. It would have been interesting to look at intention to punish as a dependent variable[1], because there is a considerable gap between intent and actually following through on a thought.

Secondly, the sample was too small and consisted mainly of participants from the WEIRD population (individuals from Western, Educated, Rich and Democratic societies). Both issues make it hard to generalize the findings to the whole population (Henrich et al., 2010). Thirdly, the difference in results for the second hypothesis raises the question if the vignettes were properly designed. The vignettes were not pre-tested, so there was no clarity whether the vignettes had the desirable effect. Because there were some differences in results between the vignettes, it is not unlikely that the vignettes did not have the same effect. Additionally, the use of vignettes to simulate workplace interactions, while beneficial for standardization, may not fully capture the complexity and dynamics of real-life situations. Participants' responses to vignettes might differ from their reactions in actual workplace contexts. It was also decided to include vignettes of different types of harm with the goal of increasing external validity. After conducting the experiment and interpreting the results, another approach could have been to design two vignettes with the same type of harm. This way, the results would have been easier to compare. Finally, the participants were exposed to the social safety campaign only once. Because of this, no conclusions could be drawn about

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[1] After carefully weighing the pros and cons of adding this variable, I decided against it because intent to punish doesn't actually measure the behaviour and it would make the analysis simpler.

the long-term effects. While these limitations do not necessarily imply that the theory or method is fundamentally flawed, they do suggest that the study's design and execution could be improved to provide more robust and generalizable findings. Future research should address these limitations to enhance the validity and applicability of the results.

Practical Implications and Future Research

From a practical standpoint, these findings offer valuable insights for organizations aiming to improve social safety through campaigns. The results indicate that only campaign exposure may not be enough to influence harm perceptions. Organizations should focus on campaign quality, ensuring that these are clear and context-specific so that they can effectively convey the message and impact harm perception. This research also suggests that additional research into the differential impact of various types of harm is needed, as a consequence of the observed difference in this thesis. Understanding these distinctions can help in adapting interventions to specific types of social harm within organizations. This could involve designing campaigns that specifically target and clearly communicate the severity of different forms of harm, ensuring that all types of harmful behaviors are adequately addressed. Next, future studies should explore other potential moderators and mediators that could influence the effectiveness of social safety campaigns. For example, examining factors such as organizational culture and individual differences could provide a clearer understanding of how and why certain campaigns succeed or fail. Finally, qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, could contribute to quantitative approaches by providing deeper insights into employees' experiences and perceptions of social safety campaigns. This combination of methods can help organizations gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing harm perception and the effectiveness of their safety initiatives.

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