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TITLE: Different Strokes for Different Folks: The Individual in an Affective Diverse Team

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Different Strokes for Different Folks: The Individual in an Affective Diverse Team

SUMMARY

Affective diversity is defined as, "the configuration of affect across group members that is not shared, nor held in common, by members of a group or team" (Barsade & Knight, 2015: 24). Scholars have evidently reported the relevance of diversity in shaping the way a group performs (Roberson, 2013). Prior research has suggested that affective context of the work group influences the attitudes and behavior of individual group members (Kim, Shin & Kim, 2013). However, most of the studies have examined the convergence in group affect (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Tanghe, Wisse & van der Flier, 2010) and reported its impact on individual outcomes (Barsade et al., 2000; Barsade & Knight, 2015). Surprisingly, studies on affective diversity and individual outcomes are at best limited. The present paper conceptualizes the contextual role of affective diversity on individual performance.

Keywords: Affective Diversity, Group Affect, Dispositional Affectivity, Individual performance.

Word Count: 3139

INTRODUCTION

The widespread economic and technological changes have led to the adoption of work teams extensively in organizations(Harrison & Klein, 2007). A union of two or more individuals, who connect with each other to work interdependently towards the attainment of a common goal is termed as a team (Baker & Salas, 1997). Teams are increasingly characterized with rising diversity on different demographic dimensions such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and more (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999) posing a pressing challenge in managing these teams in modern organizations (Tsui & Gutek, 1999). So far the research in work teams has focused mostly on the effects of demographic (e.g. age, gender, function, background) and cognitive differences (e.g. information, values) on organizational functioning (Jehn et al., 1999; Milliken & Martin, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly III, 1998), paying limited attention on the influence of psychological attributes such as group affect and its implications in organizational studies (for review, Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011).

The study of emotions, moods and dispositional affect at a collective level in a group or a team is termed as group affect (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Recently, researchers have shifted their focus from expression of emotions at intra-individual level and began exploring the social aspect of emotion and its impact on dyadic, group or organizational processes (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Barsade & Knight, 2015; Kelly & Barsade, 2001). Various researchers have recognized the existence of group affect and its essentiality to understand group dynamics (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Collins, Lawrence, Troth & Jordan, 2013; Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015). Earlier conceptualization of group affect has emphasized the natural tendency of a group to look for similarity, consistency and convergence of affective experiences (George, 1990; 1996), but scholars (e.g., Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Kelly & Barsade, 2001) have suggested that group members can also feel distinctly from each other, owing to multiple forces acting on them. Thus, extending this line of research, the paper conceptualizes the impact and implications of group affective diversity on performance at individual level.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Teams have different configurations depending on the types of tasks they need to perform (Mathieu et al., 2008). Owing to the extensive adoption of work teams in organizations, a large section of research on teams have focused on team effectiveness (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005; Kozolowski & Bell, 2003; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Salas, Stagl, & Burke, 2004). The work effectiveness of team members, shared understanding of task responsibilities and mutual positive work attitude among the members makes a team effective and productive (Nicole-Jean, 2010). Thus, it is the individual characteristics and mutual team processes that enables greater performance in a work team.

Affect is an important individual characteristic that helps in creating and sustaining work motivation and taking appropriate decisions, thereby contributing to organizational performance (REFERENCE). Scholars have made extensive studies explaining the relationship between affect and performance at individual level (for review, Cropanzano & Wright, 2001; Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Unfortunately, studies exploring the impact of group affect on team outcomes has not been given due attention (Barsade & Knight, 2015). Diverse values and attitudes of members create difficulty in establishing trust, social bonding, thus leading to poor communication, which further enhances distance among the group members (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly III, 1992). Hence, the influence of affect in group activity is an important phenomenon.

The presence of individuals having different dispositional affect to work together as a team characterizes an affective diverse team. An affectively diverse group is formed as a result of different dispositional affectivity among the team members (Barsade et al., 2000). So far, some studies have reported the impact of affective diversity on team performance (Barsade et al., 2000; Kouame et al., 2015). On similar lines, affect being a deep level attribute in diversity, it is likely to influence performance at individual level (Barsade et al., 2000; Kouame et al., 2015). The dispositional trait affect is found to have a profound effect on individual differences and behavior (Ng & Sorensen, 2009). Further, individuals have a preference for similar others (Byrne, 1971) and affective similarity or affective homogeneity in their work groups (Barsade et al., 2000; Collins et al., 2013; George, 1990). The difference in the individuals' dispositional affect in a group is referred as affective diversity (Barsade et al., 2000; Kouamé et al., 2015). As the concept of affective diversity is rooted in dispositional affectivity, we believe that the presence of individuals with different dispositional affect in the group is likely to impact the individual attributes of the other group members.

DISPOSITIONAL AFFECTIVITY & INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

Dispositional affectivity or trait affect has a greater effect on the overall attitude and behavior of individuals (Cropanzano et al., 1993). It influences the motivational, cognitive, and instrumental (relational) processes of an individual which further lays a profound impact on the work outcomes, work experiences and work behaviors respectively (Ng & Sorensen, 2009). Dispositional affectivity is closely associated with motivation which further predicts work behavior (Pinder, 2014). It has also been associated in shaping perceptions and expectations of efforts and associated rewards which further motivates the individual to perform in the task (George & Brief, 1996; Watson et al., 1999). As the task is performed in a group, it requires a certain degree of interdependence, coordination and communication among members, suggesting the differential role of group composition on individual performance.

Besides motivational processes, dispositional affectivity influences the cognitive processes of an individual in two ways. First, it predisposes an individual to be naturally positive or negative in absence of any stimulus or situational cues (Watson, 2000). Second, it also influences the processing style of cognitive information of individuals. This suggests that dispositional affectivity can influence the knowledge building or learning in individuals. Learning comprises knowledge accumulation through experiences cognitive processing, thinking, involvement & generalizations (Johnson & Thomas, 2007). This suggests that dispositional affectivity can influence the learning of an individual. Practically speaking, learning never happens in isolation, in turn, individuals learn a lot from their peers and fellow mates. In an organization, the task performing group is comprised of members with distinct trait affect which may influence the cognitive processing of an individual.

In addition, dispositional affectivity has been found to play an instrumental role in influencing the way one can approach and react to others, thereby shaping the workplace events and experiences of an individual (Ng & Sorensen, 2009). For instance, an individual with positive trait affect would have a tendency to experience positive mood facilitating a positive work approach towards the job characteristics, role requirements, social integration and organizational treatment (Thoresen et al., 2003). Contrary to this, an individual with negative trait affect will have a negative view resulting in negative approach towards work, negative job perceptions and negative interpersonal interactions (Brief et al., 1995; Spector, Fox, & Katwyk, 1999). This suggests that dispositional

affectivity is quite influential in shaping the work place events and experiences of an individual's suggesting an overall impact on individual performance.

CONTEXTUAL ROLE OF AFFECTIVE DIVERSITY

The recent emphasis on' 'affective revolution' has led researchers and practitioners to appreciate the role of employee affect and its implications on attitude, behavior, and various outcomes in organization (Barsade, Brief, Spataro, & Greenberg, 2003). Researchers have largely based their studies on affective convergence, group affective tone or emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002; Hess & Fischer, 2014) to understand and examine the role of affect on various group outcomes. This may not hold true always with diverse work groups wherein individuals come together from different backgrounds, ethnicity, religion, attitudes and values and group may have divergence. Answering to this possibility, Barsade et al. (2000) introduced and examined 'affect' as a diversity attribute and argued for the influence of different affective trait of members' causing variation in affective distribution across the group thereby impacting the group outcomes.

Affective diversity is defined as, "the configuration of affect across group members that is not shared, nor held in common, by members of a group or team" (Barsade & Knight, 2015). The concept of affective diversity is rooted in the affective personality of an individual as dispositional traits are an integral part of an individual's personality (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Similar to the positive and negative aspects of dispositional affectivity, the affective diversity can also be expressed as positive and negative. The group PA diversity refers to the degree of dispersion of trait positive affect in the group (Barsade et al., 2000; Kim, Shin, & Kim, 2013; Kim, 2016) and degree of dispersion of trait negative affect in the group is termed as the group NA diversity (Kouame et al., 2015).

Previous studies have examined the group affective contexts (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Tanghe, Wisse & van der Flier, 2010) and reported its impact on individual attitudes and team outcomes (Barsade et al., 2000). Similar attempt have been made by a few studies examining the contextual influence of affective diverse group on the relationship between trait positive affect and team outcomes (Kim, Shin, & Kim, 2013) and individual task cohesion (Kim, 2016). Addressing the scant research with regards to the moderating role of affective diversity, this study intends to contribute in this area. Henceforth, this dissertation attempts to examine the relationship between dispositional affectivity with respect to individual trait positive affect and trait negative affect with individual performance, individual learning and individual satisfaction with the contextual role of positive affective diversity and negative affective diversity in a group. For our purpose, we are drawing upon the situational strength theory (Mischel, 1977) and trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett, Simonet, Walser, & Brown, 2013) to advance our discussion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The situation strength represents the extent of situational constraints that are present in the environment (Caspi & Moffitt, 1993; Judge & Zapata, 2015). According to situational strength theory, a strong situation is one having clear rules, structure, and cues that provides a guidance for expected behavior (Meyer et al., 2010; Mischel, 1977). On the other hand, weak situations are one which are ambiguous and are unstructured (Mischel, Ebbesen, & Zeiss, 1973). In context of strong situation, the situational factors supersede the individual traits in determining the course of action while in case of weak situations individual differences plays an important role in influencing the decision choices and behavior of individuals (Mischel, 1977). The affective dispositions plays a

more influential role when there is a greater ambiguity or conflicting nature of stimuli (Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Further, the prediction of performance on the basis of trait largely depends on the context in which an individual traits get activated according to the cues of the situation (Judge and Zapata, 2015). Trait activation refers to the process by which, "individuals express their traits when presented with trait relevant situational cues (Tett & Burnett, 2003:502). According to trait activation theory, the expression of traits is also contingent on the strength of the situation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett et al., 2013). Building upon this, we intend to examine the contextual role of positive affective diversity and negative affective diversity on the individual trait affect-performance relationship.

POSITIVE AFFECTIVITY & INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

In a positive affective diverse group, the team members are composed of affective traits ranging from high to low positive affect. This divergence of positive affect decreases the interpersonal satisfaction of member in the team (Barsade et al., 2000). The members will/or may try to criticize one another (Lau & Murnigham, (2005), further making the members uncomfortable in presenting their thoughts and opinions (Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004). This makes a team more susceptible to negative affective reaction due to increase in affective conflict and decreased cooperation specifically (Barsade et al., 2000). As authors' further stated, the affective conflict is more pronounced and is likely to be directed towards individuals, making it worse for the team to work cohesively. This affectively charged context of affective diversity may also have an impact on the performance of an individual in the team. Moreover, affective diverse team due to trait PA represents a weak situation for trait activation which allows the free expression of TPA (Kim, Shin, & Kim, 2013; Kim, 2016). Further, the PA diversity will reduce the fear of appraisal, need for social bonding and fear of losing face among the group members leading to individuation (Rink & Ellmers, 2007), enhanced autonomy and task cohesion in individuals (Kim, 2016). This suggests an increased commitment of individual members towards the work leading to greater individual performance.

On the other hand, the negative affect conveys a problematic situation (Schwarz, 1990), which suggests individuals that something is wrong and they need to put extra effort to fix it. In a group context, TNA has been found to be associated with no relationship with variables of social nature (McIntyre et al., 1991). It enhance keen attention to new and possible troublesome information (Watson & Clark, 1984) with an open mind to accept diverse and disconfirming information (Olsen & Zanna, 1979). High NA has been found to be associated with less risky strategic decisions (Delgado-Garcia & De La Fuente-Sabate, 2010) suggesting more calculative decision making approach. Added further, the heterogeneity in negative affectivity was found to be positively associated with in-depth processing and risk aversion (Kooij-de Bode et al., 2010). Recently, Kouame et al (2015) reported the positive relationship with negative affective diversity and management decision making at unit level, referring it as a strength of the group. The negative affect in a negative affective diverse group conveys a situation of distress and danger making it a strong situation for a group and the members will respond to devise a clear behavior strategy to get rid of the negativity. Thus, a group with negative affective diversity will serve as a strong situation facilitating in-depth information processing and reduced focus on social cohesion. This will enhance the performance of individual with TPA as the presence of negative affect will remove the overconfidence due to positive affect, thereby making one more vigilant and attentive. Considerable support to this, can be received from the mood congruency perspective (Ziegler, 2010) which asserts that the negative affect disconfirms the affect related expectancies which

enhances the information processing by individuals. Further, the high negative individuals acting as a 'devil's advocate' or an 'alert maker' will make the individuals more alert and attentive leading to better individual performance. But, it is crucial to note that high negative affectivity (too many members of negative affectivity in group) will limit action tendencies and more conformism (Delgado-Garcia & De La Fuente-Sabate, 2010) leading to poor individual performance. Thus, we propose,

Proposition 1a: Positive affective diversity moderates the positive or negative relationship between TPA and individual performance, such that the relationship is stronger when positive affective diversity is high.

Proposition 1b: Negative affective diversity moderates the positive or negative relationship between TPA and individual performance, such that the relationship is stronger when negative affective diversity is low.

NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY & INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

The negative affect is associated with anxiety, distress and avoidance behavior (Watson, 2000) and the individual will be more attentive towards the negative information (Ng & Sorensen, 2009). As argued earlier, a positive affective diverse group will also act as a weak situation for an individual with trait NA. This will lead to the free expression of NA by the individual. The high positive affective diversity is characterized with stressful social relationships (Barsade et al., 2000) which will further amplify the impact of negative affect leading to poor individual performance. On the other hand, we believe that presence of low positive affective diversity can attenuate the effect of negative affect leading to better performance.

In contrast, the negative affective diversity puts forth a strong situational context which restricts the activation or expression of individual trait. The negative affect conveys a situation of distress and danger making it a strong situation for a group. Responding to the demand of strong situation the members in an affective diverse group due to trait NA would devise a clear behavior strategy to get rid of the negativity. Further, the potential consequences of poor performance (Fortunato & Williams, 2002) and attempt to get rid of negativity (George, 1989) due to high negative affective diversity will enhance the motivation of the individual leading to better performance. Hence, we propose,

Proposition 2a: Positive affective diversity moderates the positive or negative relationship between TNA and individual performance, such that the relationship is stronger when positive affective diversity is low.

Proposition 2b: Negative affective diversity moderates the positive or negative relationship between TNA and individual performance, such that the relationship is stronger when negative affective diversity is high.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

First, this dissertation is an attempt to contribute to the research in diversity management (Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015). Deviating from the recent attention on surface level diversity characteristics such as demography (McDonald & Westphal, 2013), gender (Nishii, 2013) and culture (Nederveen Pieterse et al., 2013), the present study intends to contribute to the research in deep-level diversity by examining the impact of affective diversity. Second, this dissertation also

intends to contribute theoretically by addressing the call for research in group affective composition (Barsade & Knight, 2015). The study has the potential to contribute to the practitioners to manage and reap the advantage of diverse teams. In addition, the study has implications towards designing, deciding the composition and the management of work teams.

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