

ESSAYS ON ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT



A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Within organizations, employees continually confront situations that put them face to face with the decision of whether to speak up or voice their concerns or remain silent. Organizational dissent is a form of 'speaking up' – that involves expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices and policies (Kassing, 2002). Scholars have argued that dissent is important for an organization's success as well as for an individual's job satisfaction (e.g. Avtgis et al., 2007). Dissent is an important arena of study because of the positive effects that it can have on the organization (e.g., Shahinpoor and Matt, 2007; Hegstorm, 1990).

Much of the research in the field of dissent is focused on dissent expression in terms of the individual, relational, and organizational factors affecting the decision to express dissent. The extant literature on organizational dissent can be classified into three sub-categories of dissent expression: antecedents for dissent expression; audience to whom dissent could be expressed; dissent strategies, messages and medium (e.g. Otkena and Cenkcı, 2015; Sollitto and Myers, 2015; Payne, 2007). However, less attention has been paid to the factors influencing the choice of dissent strategies. Employees choose dissent strategies under consideration of a complex set of factors (Kassing, 2000). Nonetheless, dissent being a very personalized act, individual decision premise of the dissenter will sway the dissent expression strategies. This study focuses on understanding how a dissenter's dispositional traits and affect states (that are argued to play a crucial role in work settings) will influence the choice of dissent expression strategies.

To understand the relationship between dispositional traits, affect states on intention to dissent and choice of dissent strategies, the proposed hypotheses were tested by adopting experimental research design. Three independent experiments were conducted for the same. Controlling for age, gender, and work experience; the dependent and independent variables of the study are

captured by adopting established scales in the literature. Results of study 1 and study 2 reveal a significant association between affect states of an individual on his / her intention to dissent and choice of a dissent strategy. Positive mood was found to enhance the individual's intention to dissent and preferring pro-social dissent strategy over others. Results from study 3 reveal a positive and significant relation between conscientiousness and extraversion dimensions of personality on intention to dissent and preference for a pro-social dissent strategy. Subsequent informal interviews further substantiated the study results.

The present study incrementally contributes to the literature of dissent by identifying the role of individual level factors on intention to dissent and choice of dissent strategies. By exploring the role of affect (mood) on the intention to dissent and choice of dissent strategy, the results of the study further advances the existing knowledge in the field of social cognition.

Keywords: Organizational dissent, dissent strategies, personality, mood

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