**Research Question:** Are students with higher moral disengagement more likely to engage in social loafing behavior?

**Background Research**

Moral disengagement is a form of self-deception in which the individual detaches themselves from the ethical standards in the particular context. Bandura (1986) first proposed the concept of moral disengagement in his seminal book on social cognitive theory to explain why individuals engage in immoral behaviors without experiencing guilt and psychological pain. Moral disengagement produces specific cognitive tendencies, like redefining one's behavior to make it seem less harmful, minimizing one's responsibility in the consequences of the behavior, and reducing the recognition of the victim's suffering. (Bandura, 1986).

Many scholars have researched this phenomenon and drawn corresponding conclusions. Ju Di's (2020) research pointed out that moral disengagement helps employees rationalize their social loafing behaviors in the workplace. This conclusion implies that moral disengagement may affect the occurrence of social loafing.

Correspondingly, Zhong Xi, Wang Tian, and their research group (2019) have pointed out that as the Machiavellianism level (i.e., the tendency of individuals utilizing others to achieve personal goals) increases, the positive impact of the broken of psychological contracts on moral disengagement and the positive impact of moral disengagement on unethical behaviors of employees also increases.

Moral disengagement may increase the level of social loafing. In short, individuals with high moral disengagement levels disable the mechanism of self-condemnation (Detert et al., 2008) and engage in unethical behaviors like social loafing behavior.

Based on the above analysis, our hypothesis is proposed as follows: Moral disengagement is positively correlated with the level of social loafing.

Sources

Bandura, A. (1986). Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A social Cognitive Theory. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 12*(1), 169.

Detert, J. R., Treviño, L. K., & Sweitzer, V. L. (2008). Moral disengagement in ethical decision making: A study of antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 93*(2), 374–391.

Zhong, X., & Fu, Y., & Wang, T. (2019). 《包容性领导、内部人身份认知与员工知识共享——组织创新氛围的调节作用》[Inclusive Leadership, Insider Identity Awareness and Employee Knowledge Sharing: Regulating the Organizational Innovation Atmosphere]. *Research and development management,* 109-120.

**Sampling and Experimental Design**

* Type of study: Observational study
* Two variables: moral disengagement and social loafing behavior
* Data analysis: regression analysis
* Scope of inference: correlational links can be applied to student work groups in China

**Group task Assignments & Timeline**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tasks\Timeline** | **5.15-5.17** | **5.18-5.25** | **5.26-5.27** | **5.28** |
| **Information Research+proposal** | **Jamie, Selena,** |  |  |  |
| **Data collection** |  | **Jamie, Selena, Kiana** |  |  |
| **Data Analysis** |  |  | **Jamie, Kiana** |  |
| **Conclusions** |  |  | **Selena** |  |
| **Final check** |  |  |  | **Kiana** |

**Research Sample**

In this study, a questionnaire survey will be conducted to recruit subjects through the WeChat platform, and students from several middle schools and universities in Beijing will be investigated. This study will promise the participants’ confidentiality and require them to review their performance in a specific group at a past time period, then answer according to their situation. This study will provide each participant with a reward of 4 yuan. In order to meet the research purpose and improve the quality of the questionnaire, the subjects will be asked to choose a group that met the following six requirements in the questionnaire instruction:

(1) The group is formed to complete a specific task.

(2) The group's performance will be evaluated as a whole.

(3) The respondents participated in the group's activities in the past three months.

(4) The group consists of at least three members.

(5) The respondent has been involved in the group’s activities for at least three days.

(6) The respondents have participated in the group's activities at least once a week (online and offline).

**Measurement of variables**

We plan to conduct a hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the relationship between moral disengagement and social loafing.

The measurement tools used in this study were all published, scholarly reviewed scales. All variables in the study were measured by Likert seven-point scale, with one representing "completely inconsistent" or "strongly disagree" and seven representing "completely consistent" or "strongly agree." In order to adapt to the specific situation of this study, necessary adjustments were made to some items in the scales. The measurement methods of each variable are as follows:

(1) Moral Disengagement:

Seven measurement items were selected from the scale developed by Bandura (1986). A representative item includes, "it is tolerable to take something without the owner's permission if it is just borrowing." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale in this study is 0.880.

(2) Social Loafing:

Eight measurement items were selected from the scale developed by George and J.M. (1992), one of which was a reverse scoring question. Representative items include “While others are working hard, I feel that me doing less will not affect the final result of the project.” The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale in this study is 0.785.