

The Impact of Different Intentions of Employers within Corporal Social Responsibility Institutions on Employee Misbehavior

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Abstract

This article focuses on the self-serving bias and its impact in charitable giving and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Self-serving bias refers to people making decisions for their own benefit, which may cause the actual effects of charitable donations and corporate social responsibility to be affected. In terms of charitable giving, the article mentions the impact of risk and ambiguity on donor behavior. Research has found that people donate less when faced with uncertainty, whether it's risk or ambiguity. However, one study found no significant difference in people's generous behavior under risk and ambiguity. In terms of corporate social responsibility, research has found that corporate social responsibility can promote employee productivity, but this depends on whether employees believe that corporate motivations for demonstrating social responsibility are non-utilitarian. On the other hand, employees of companies with social corporate responsibility may experience increased misconduct due to moral license. Moral licensing refers to people's belief that they can behave immorally because of their past moral behavior. It is a self-serving bias that uses one's past excellent behavior as an excuse. In summary, this article explores the impact of self-interest bias in the areas of charitable giving and corporate social responsibility, pointing out problems that may arise from factors such as uncertainty, risk, ambiguity, and moral licensing. Understanding these factors and their impact can help us better assess and respond to the challenges posed by self-serving biases.

Introduction

Background

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and prosocial behaviors have attracted more and more attention from people and enterprises with the progress of eras. The origin of social corporate responsibility was proposed by Bowen (2013) in 1953. He was the first person to provide a comprehensive analysis of corporate ethics and social responsibilities. His theory was of great assistance to the study of corporate social responsibility in the next half century and helped it gradually become the standard for measuring corporate behavior with economic globalization and the 2008 economic crisis.

Although corporate social responsibility will attract more customers who want the products and services they purchase to be safeguarded and investors who want their investments to be profitable, its impact on employees is two-sided. On the positive side, employees may believe that socially responsible companies will have more friendly senior administrators, increasing their desire for win-win cooperation. On the negative side, employees may think that their social image is better because they are in a company with corporate social responsibility, thus giving themselves an excuse to engage in inappropriate behavior with self-serving bias (List & Momeni, 2020). This form of self-serving bias is called moral licensing. The two factors of social corporate responsibility have opposite effects on employees. This has allowed researchers to do a lot of empirical research on whether corporate social responsibility has an overall

positive or negative impact on employees and the strength of this impact.

Furthermore, corporal social responsibility has been growing popular, being adopted by an increasing number of companies. Nevertheless, some firms have made it a means of attracting high quality investors and loyal investors, thereby promoting their sales and profits. Though it might seem profitable to do so, if the intention of gaining money using a philanthropic concept is discovered by the employees, the employee might exhibit more misbehaviors. On the other hand, if the employees perceive their employers as being prosocial by practicing corporal social responsibility, the employees will probably take less misbehaviors.

As corporal social responsibility becomes more and more common, research in this field is becoming more and more worthy of attention and has high practicality. The penetration of social corporate responsibility into companies around the world indicates that understanding its relationship with employee behavior and decision-making can help more companies develop more effective social corporate responsibility methods and reduce the unintended consequences that may lead misbehaviors. Initially aiming to create more social welfare, corporal social responsibility has become a means for some companies to attract better employees, more loyal customers and more investors. This originally prosocial behavior becomes utilitarian and gradually deviates from the primary purpose. This phenomenon may also change the benefits that corporal social responsibility can previously bring. Therefore, this article examines such potential changes to help companies better develop plans regarding corporal social responsibility and manage employee

misbehaviors.

Regarding social corporate responsibility, this article focuses on its impact on employees' inappropriate behavior. Starting from studying the difference between utilitarian social corporate responsibility and non-utilitarian social corporate responsibility from the perspective of employees, it distinguishes between retaliative misbehaviors caused by decrease in employee's profit and self-serving misbehaviors.

Literature Review

This section of the paper will dig into some past research that investigate concepts and notions related to this topic. The first part will include papers related to self-serving bias, showing how the control for different factors influences people's degree of self-serving. The second part will include papers related to corporal regulations, showing how different corporal social responsibilities will affect employee productivity and misbehaviors.

Self-Serving Bias

Let's first focus on factors that contribute to people's self-serving biases, that is, what people often use as excuses for their inappropriate behavior. From the company's perspective, it is essential that the influence of self-serving bias is minimized. A research instrument called Dictator Game is often used in studies related to self-serving bias. The Dictator Game is an experiment between a Dictator

and a Recipient. The dictator will have the right to choose between two distribution methods of benefits, one that is fair to both parties and another that is beneficial to the dictator. The recipients will not have the right to reject the distribution method chosen by the dictator. In a dictator game, if the dictator thinks and makes decisions with absolutely rational thinking, the recipient should not receive any benefits. However, in experiments, many subjects still gave benefits to the other party when acting as a dictator. (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986) According to the research of Andreoni and Miller (2002) and Engelmann and Strobel (2004), this may be because dictators try to increase total social payoff, a sign of altruism stemming from kindness.

In the literature examining dictators' motivations for granting benefits to recipients, Dana et al. (2006) explores two other motivations for dictators to make irrational choices. In previous assumptions and frameworks, dictators behave like purchasing social benefits. However, researchers believe that dictators may grant benefits to recipients because of their sense of morality. In order to break through this layer of morality, people may use self-serving bias to provide psychological comfort for their actions. What the researchers explore in this article is the relationship between the dictator's willful ignorance and the decision-maker's uncertainty and the benefits given to the recipients. They designed four experimental groups through laboratory experiments. The first is the basic dictator game; the second is that dictators in the dictator game have the right to not understand the impact of their contributions on the recipients, that is, they can choose not to understand this information before making decisions; the third is that there will be two dictators in the

dictator game, and only after both dictators act self-interested will the recipient or not gain; the fourth is that the dictator must make a choice before a random time within ten seconds ends, and if no decision is made, the final decision will be randomly selected by the system.

The results of the experiment found that only about three-quarters of the dictators in the first experimental group gave benefits to the other party, and only less than half of the dictators in the last three experimental groups gave benefits to the other party. Previous research on dictator games has shown that dictators make irrational decisions based on the preference for an equal society or outcome. This article builds on previous research to show that people feel compelled to grant benefits to others for certain moral reasons. The key factor introduced in the experiment is non-transparency to verify the impact of moral factors. In the latter three experimental groups, the dictators would not blame themselves if the results that maximized social benefits were not achieved in the end, because such results were not entirely achieved by their subjective decisions. The conclusion drawn from this article is that people use uncertainty about the cause of the failure to achieve the socially optimal outcome as an excuse to make self-interested decisions, that is, self-serving bias.

Bartling, Engl, and Weber (2014) used laboratory experimental methods to explore the intentional ignorance behavior of the third party, that is, society, towards the dictator on the basis of this research. In Dana et al. (2006), the second experimental group of dictators in the experiment could make decisions. In their experiment, a group of people would be chosen as third parties. They can see whether

each dictator made a choice, know the consequences of their actions, and the decisions each dictator made, and then punish them. This experiment further proves that even third parties can be affected by self-serving bias. People who make self-interested decisions and know the consequences are punished more than people who make self-interested decisions but don't know the consequences.

In order to make their inappropriate behavior more legitimate in their own eyes, people may also denigrate others in their own minds (Di Tella et al., 2015). In their dictator game, the receiver decides the conversion efficiency of chips and real money at the same time as the dictator makes the decision and receives additional chips when choosing a lower conversion efficiency. By designing two experimental groups—one in which the recipients' decisions were randomly generated by a computer, as described above—they found that people attributed their inappropriate behavior to the belief that others would behave inappropriately. When switching efficiency is stochastic, dictators engage in less self-interested behavior.

Through these series of dictator games that control for different factors, it is gradually revealed that altruism is often not out of pure kindness but a desire to gain a better moral image. This can have significant implications in a corporal context, where employees also use moral images to justify their misbehaviors.

Corporal Regulations

Employee misbehaviors is common and detrimental to businesses. Between 1997 and 2013, companies lost approximately 5.6% of revenue annually due to employee

misbehaviors and increased by nearly 18% in the last two years (Gee & Button, 2015). One way to solve this problem is corporate social responsibility (CSR), which refers to the responsibility that companies must take for the sake of the society, the public, and employees (Sheehy, 2015). Once a company takes on such a responsibility, it gives consumers a guarantee of the company's determination to produce socially beneficial products and promotes consumer consumption (Bagnoli & Watts, 2003; Lii & Lee, 2011). For employees, they experience changes in productivity and inappropriate behavior under the stimulation of corporate social responsibility.

Most articles focusing on productivity conclude that CSR promotes productivity (Tonin and Vlassopoulos, 2015; Gubler et al., 2018). For example, in an examination of many B corps, companies that are committed to more social responsibility than the basics of corporate social responsibility, research discovered that there is a strong positive correlation between corporate social responsibility and employees' enhanced productivity (Romi et al., 2018). However, research by Cassar and Meier (2020) found a relationship between the increase in employee productivity caused by corporate social responsibility and employees' perceived motivations for companies to demonstrate corporate social responsibility. They designed an experiment based on the conclusion drawn by Henderson and Steen (2015) that goals other than corporate profit maximization or risky profits would make people feel that such goals are not utilitarian. Their experimental results show that people will reduce productivity when they believe that companies are demonstrating corporate social responsibility for their own benefit. Self-serving bias causes people to use the improper purpose of the

business as an excuse to work less hard. And if there is additional compensation, when the company pays for its own benefit, work efficiency will not decrease but increase. Thus, people will only be less productive under the utilitarian incentives of social corporate responsibility. This conclusion adds a qualification to the conclusion of many previous studies that social corporate responsibility will increase productivity (Burbano, 2016; Burbano, 2019).

In addition, in the field of employee misconduct, List and Momeni (2020) found that social corporate responsibility will increase employee misconduct. They studied the impact of moral licensing on employee misconduct. Moral licensing refers to people's belief that they can behave immorally because of their past moral behavior. It is a self-serving bias that uses one's past excellent behavior as an excuse (Miller & Effron, 2010). Employees of companies with social corporate responsibility may feel that because they are in such a company, they have a good social image and accept the feasibility of inappropriate behavior.

In their experiment, subjects were divided into three experimental groups: a baseline experimental group, a corporate information group, and an employee information group. Their experiment is based on the conclusion drawn by Kouchaki and Jami (2018) that when companies describe the performers of social corporate responsibility as employees rather than companies, moral licensing will have a greater impact on employees. Each experimental group was asked to translate ten photos with German in them, one of which was unreadable. Participants were told only that there would be photos that were unclear and that they could skip those photos while still

completing the task. Skipping a clearly visible photo is considered inappropriate behavior. In the business information group, they were told that the business would donate part of their compensation. In the employee information group, they were told that the company would donate part of their compensation in the name of the employee.

Ultimately, they found that employees in the corporate information group engaged in 18% more misconduct than the baseline group, while employees in the employee information group engaged in 30% more misconduct than the baseline group. This difference is sufficient to conclude that social corporate responsibility does increase employee misconduct and that a major cause of this behavior is moral licensing.

To sum up, previous scholars have revealed the impact of social corporate responsibility on employee productivity and misconduct from different aspects and perspectives and have achieved meaningful research results. However, there is currently little research that distinguishes retaliatory misbehavior caused by lowered wages from self-serving bias misbehavior. Previous research only showed that the utilitarian nature of social corporate responsibility will reduce employee productivity. Therefore, based on the experiment designed by List and Momeni (2020), this article added hints of corporal utilitarianism and a treatment exclusively containing self-serving bias misbehaviors.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The core research topic of this paper is to examine, considering the different impacts on employees' misbehaviors under different employer's intentions of corporate social responsibility, whether self-serving bias, specifically moral licensing, contributes to the increase in employees' misbehaviors apart from the retaliative misbehaviors caused by a lower profit from the employees' perspective. The hypothesis proposed supports that there will still be misbehaviors in addition to the retaliative misbehavior, and those misbehaviors are caused by self-serving bias.

Methodologies

Based on the above theory, the experimental methodology of this paper will be explained in this section.

Subjects

To find a randomized group of people from the general population of any age, gender, or occupation, I devised a questionnaire and publicized it through an academic organization. The questionnaire asked for the name, gender, and whether the respondent is available during the time of the experiment. The respondents will learn they are asked to participate in an economics experiment, but they will not learn the content of the experiment. They were also informed that they will receive payments after the experiment.

Table 1

Experimental Group Names

	Utilitarian	Prosocial
Voluntary Donation	VU	VP
Compulsory Donation	CU	CP
Monetary Reward	MU	MP

This experiment adopted a 2*3 experimental design, with a total of 6 experimental groups. Subjects will be randomly assigned to one of the six experimental groups. All subjects, no matter which experimental group they are assigned to, will be required to complete a translation task.

For the experimental groups with voluntary donations and compulsory donations (VU, VP, CU, CP), they will be motivated by corporal social responsibility. In this experiment, social corporate responsibility was in the form of donations. As a non-profit organization, we will donate the subjects' donations to charities. For the experimental group with extra rewards (MU, MP), subjects will be motivated by bonuses.

On the day of the experiment, the subjects randomly picked an instruction sheet from a folder containing the sheets. The instruction sheet will indicate the group they are in and their serial number, which corresponded to the serial number of computers in the economics lab the experiment took place. It will also explain the content of the experiment (See Appendix A).

Instructions

Task Content

In order to simulate the actual situation of employees working in an enterprise, the experiment gave each employee a translation task. Each employee is given 5 sets of Morse code photos, each set of photos consisting of 5 photos that contain a sentence written in Morse code, for a total of 25 photos. If translated into English, each photo is approximately a 10-word sentence. At the same time, they will be provided with a translation table between Morse code and English letters to assist them in completing the translation. They will have to enter the translated sentence onto a computer.

Unable to Translate

Among these five groups of photos, one of the five photos in groups 1, 3, and 4 was blurred, making it impossible to translate. Before starting the translation of a photo, they can decide the photo as "untranslatable" and skip the translation of that photo. Doing so will not affect their tasks being judged as completed, that is, they can still receive the predetermined wage and perform corresponding donation or bonus operations.

Misbehavior

This paper attempts to quantify how employee misbehaviors differs across

situations. Misbehaviors in this experiment occurred when the subject rated a clearly visible photo as "untranslatable" or when the subject mistranslated more than half of the words in a photo. They might be motivated to deliberately do so in order to save the effort of translating a photo.

Wage

After completing the translation task for each set of photos, the subjects will be given wages. Then they will use a portion of the wage to perform the corresponding donation or bonus operation. The instruction sheets each group of subjects will receive are different, only explaining the instructions for their corresponding treatment of the wages and the intention of their employer (See Appendix B)

Result

My experiment was carried out in January 2024. There was a total of 102 subjects who attended the experiment, and they provided valuable data for my experiment.

The experiment has one core indicator, which is the number of misbehaviors. I will measure the number of misbehaviors as defined in previous parts of each subject. The data are presented as follows, where the x-axis represent the number of misbehaviors in each experimental group and the y-axis represents the frequency of that number of misbehaviors:

Figure 1

Data of VU Experimental Group

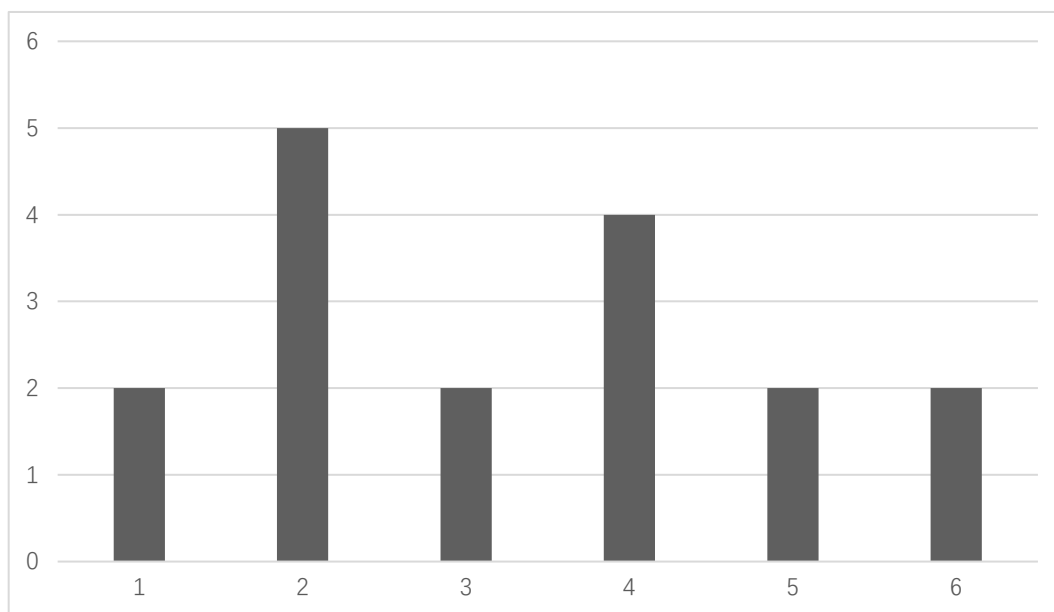


Figure 2

Data of VP Experimental Group

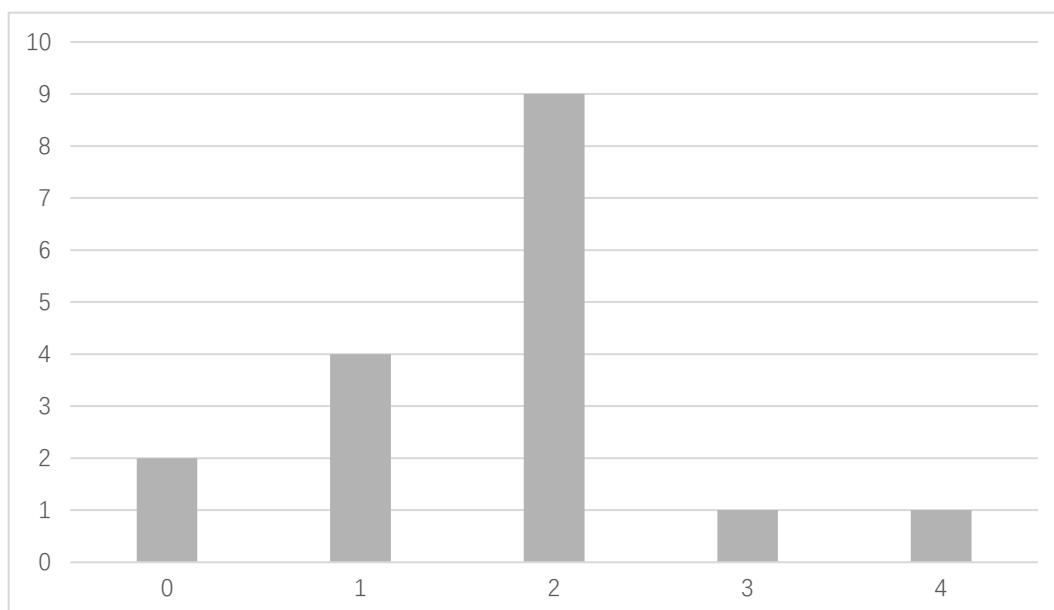


Figure 3

Data of CU Experimental Group

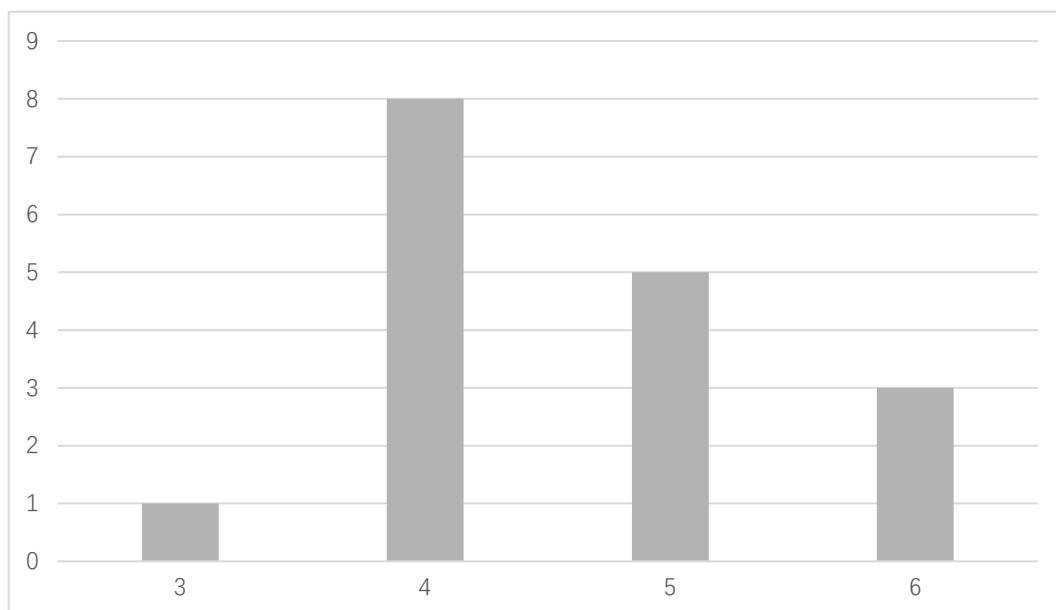


Figure 4

Data of CP Experimental Group

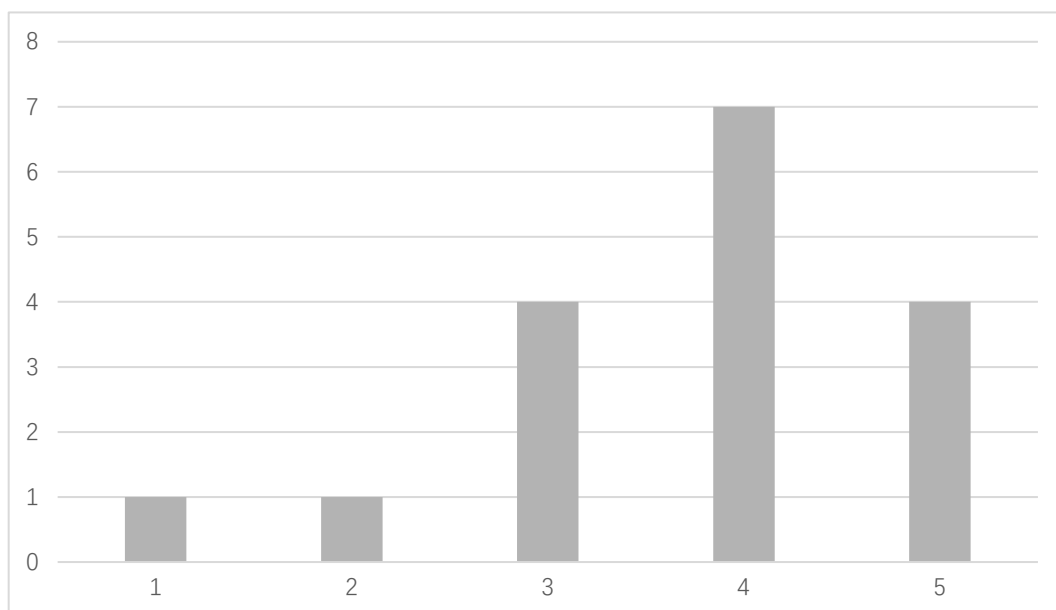


Figure 5

Data of MU Experimental Group

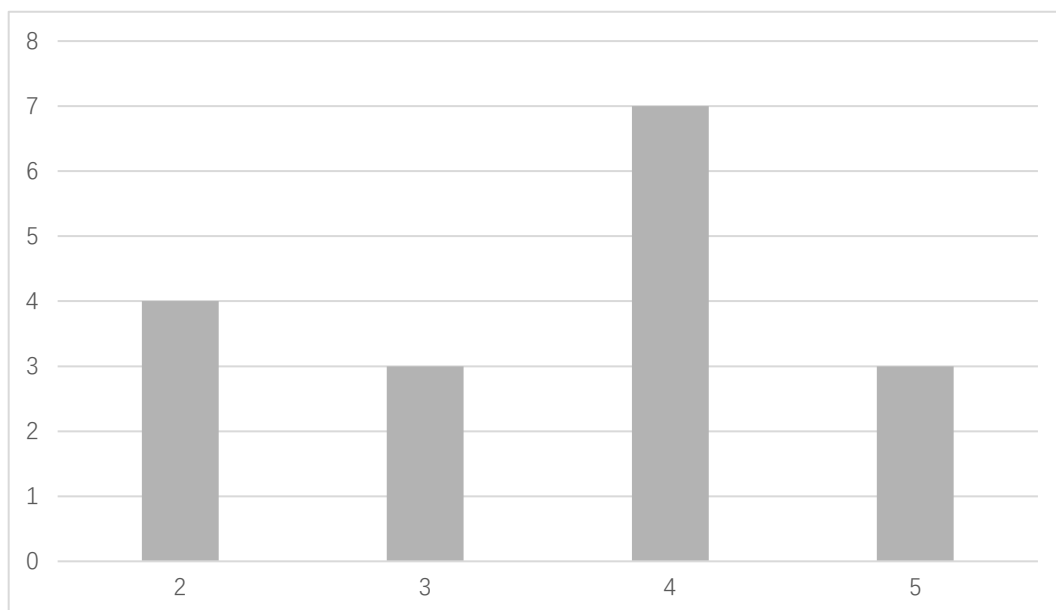
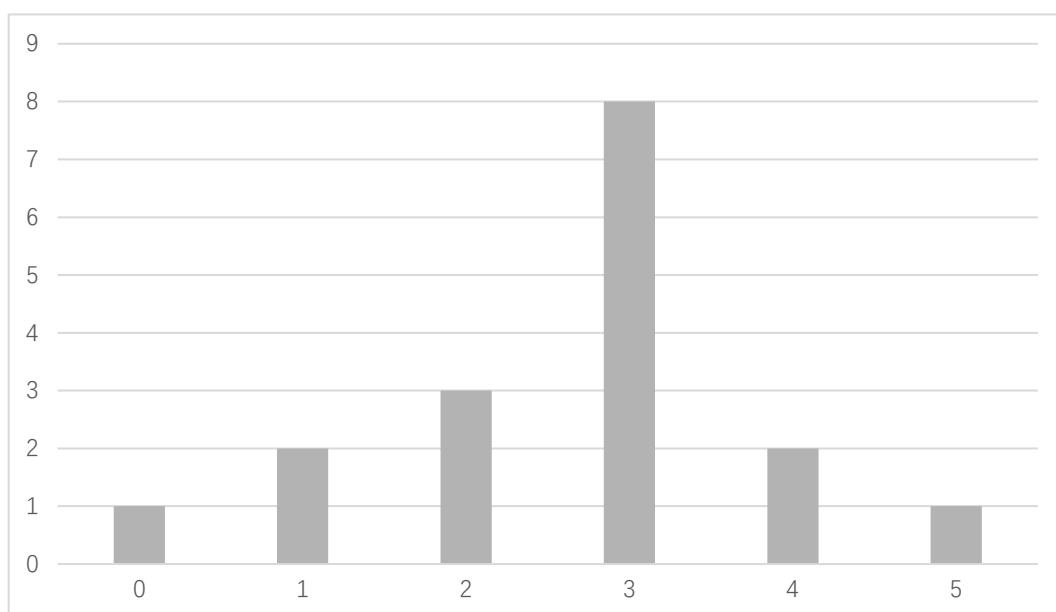


Figure 6

Data of MP Experimental Group



Analysis

Table 2

Statistics of Data

	Utilitarian Intention	Prosocial Intention	Total
Voluntary Donation	3.294, 1.611	1.706, 0.985	2.500, 1.542
Compulsory Donation	4.588, 0.870	3.706, 1.105	4.147, 1.077
Monetary Reward	3.529, 1.068	2.647, 1.222	3.088, 1.215
Total	3.804, 1.327	2.686, 1.364	3.245, 1.452

Note. For each entry (x, y), the first number (x) represents the mean of the number of misbehaviors in the experimental group; the second number (y) represents the standard deviation of the number of misbehaviors in the experimental group.

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the number of employee misbehaviors under each type of incentives (Voluntary Donation, Compulsory Donation, Monetary Reward), and each type of perceived intention (Utilitarian Intention, Prosocial Intention).

Result A. There is convincing statistical evidence that people will work more properly when the intention of the employer is prosocial instead of utilitarian.

When the incentives for the work are held uniform, there is an apparent decrease in the number of misbehaviors going from utilitarian intention experimental group to prosocial intention experimental group ($p\text{-value} < 0.001$).

This disparity is probably caused by the employee's expectation of other people's moral standard. To many people, they are unwilling to see people utilizing kindness to benefit selfishly. Thus, even if the results are the same, the intention of practicing corporal social responsibility matters for the employees. The employees will not want to work very hard for a corporation who exploits the kindness of society. On the other hand, it is crucial for the corporation to hide such intention from the employees to

maximize efficiency.

Result B. There is convincing statistical evidence that people will work more properly when the incentive for work is voluntary donation instead of compulsory donation.

When the perceived intentions of the employers are held uniform, there is an apparent decrease in the number of misbehaviors going from compulsory donation experimental group to monetary reward experimental group ($p\text{-value} < 0.001$).

This is the key takeaway from the results of this research. The incorporation of a compulsory donation group, which means that the employees are forced to practice corporal social responsibility, in opposition to voluntary donation group clearly draws the line between retaliative misbehaviors and self-serving misbehaviors. Since the donation is required in the compulsory donation group, people who do not want to be altruistic will be discontent about the donation they had to enact. To revenge the company, they will exhibit misbehaviors. However, these misbehaviors are eliminated in the voluntary donation group. People who do not wish to be altruistic no longer have to practice corporal social responsibility. Thus, the misbehaviors left will be caused by self-serving bias. They will not revenge because their employers have not forced them to make the donations. The difference in the number of misbehaviors between the two groups accounts for the retaliative misbehaviors discussed above.

Recommendations

One of the groups of people who could benefit the most from learning and understanding the results of this study is the companies. It can be very helpful for employers and managers to comprehend what the root causes of the employees' misbehaviors are and formulate particular regulations tailored to these causes.

The results of this paper indicate that employees will exhibit increased misbehaviors when they find their employers utilizing corporal social responsibility as a tool to gain profits. Thus, it is very important for employers to hide this intention from the employees if they wish to gain profits from the practice of corporal social responsibility. They must deliver the message that their action of corporal social responsibility is to benefit society, which obeys the original purpose of corporal social responsibility. Furthermore, the carryout of corporal social responsibility, no matter the form, often will require the sacrifice of the employees' partial benefit. It is significant for the employers to take account of the employees who do not wish to participate in the corporal social responsibility programs. They will raise their misbehaviors if they were forced to take part in these programs. Therefore, employers can avoid these misbehaviors by either adopting voluntary participation or propagating the advantages of these programs.

Conclusion

It is of crucial importance to understand how corporal social responsibility affects

how employees will act. The popularity and the widespread influence of corporal social responsibility has induced increasing attentions from professionals and researcher over the years. This phenomenon will only grow more prevalent in the future as more companies and firms participate in the trend to promote corporal social responsibility.

This paper is a response to this rising prevalence of corporal social responsibility. It is very important for people to understand the impact of corporal social responsibility due to its projected vogue. Such understanding will help people better exploit corporal social responsibility to the fullest extent possible to benefit society. Particularly, employers and firm managers will be interested in this area of research. Finding the relationship between the utilization of corporal social responsibility and employees can be of great significance to the improvement of their management of the company. Since corporal social responsibility, by its original intent, serves to bring welfare to society, employees will certainly be motivated to exhibit higher productivity. This has been confirmed by multiple researchers. However, at the same time, the effect of moral licensing, excusing one's misbehavior for having done something morally right in the past, can potentially increase the number of misbehaviors of the employees. Furthermore, some employees might not exhibit prosocial behaviors. They will perform retributive misbehaviors as part of their own benefit are taken away for the company to demonstrate its corporal social responsibility. These problems have not been addressed by previous researchers and are the main focus of this paper.

Future research can take into account the effects of corporal social responsibility on employee misbehavior in the long term. Due to the limitations of a laboratory experiment, the time for the experiment cannot be too long. However, in the long term the impact of corporal social responsibility might be different, and it better fits the real-world scenarios.

Appendixes

Appendix A. Experimental Instructions

(Original in Chinese)

Welcome to this experiment of work simulation. Please ensure that electronic devices, including phones and smart watches, are turned off during the experiment. Your seat number is: _____. Please find the seat labeled by your seat number. During the experiment, you must not communicate with other people around you. If you have any questions regarding the experiment, you should raise your hand and one of us will come to you. If you violate any of these rules, you will be excluded from the experiment without any payments.

During the experiment, you will earn credits, which will be displayed at the bottom right of your screen. At the end of the experiment, you will receive earnings equal to the credits you have.

We ensure that all of the information that you have provided to us, including the decisions you have made during the experiment, is anonymous. Your earnings will be

given to you in cash in an envelope in another room individually.

The experiment has a phase where we will make donations. We will make the donation in front of you at the end of the experiment so that you can witness the process.

After the experiment begins, the following will happen:

1. You will receive a piece of paper with each letter and its corresponding Morse Code.
2. You will receive an envelope containing five pictures. Each picture will have a sentence written in Morse Code on it.
3. You must enter the translated sentence one by one in order into the box on the computer screen. After you finish the entering the sentence, click “Next” on the bottom right of the screen.
4. If you find a picture too blurred to translate entirely, click “Skip” on the left of the “Next” button. You will not be punished for skipping.
5. After you finish handling all five pictures, the screen will show you the credits you gained from these pictures and the total amount of credit you have gained. You can check the total amount of credit you have gained any time at the bottom right of your screen.
6. Steps 2-5 will be repeated five rounds. Each time, the pictures you receive will be different. You may leave pictures in previous rounds aside.

Appendix B. Instructions for Different Experimental Groups

VU

In the VU experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

"In order to increase the company's revenue and attract more customers, employees and investments, our company will implement social corporate responsibility and gain a better social image by donating to a charity. Therefore, after receiving your salary, you will be able to choose to donate a certain proportion of the salary to a charity. You can also choose to keep it yourself. Note: If you choose to donate, your name and donation amount will be listed on the donation list."

VP

In the VP experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

"As a company committed to creating more social value and seeking more benefits for employees, we will implement social enterprises, although this means sacrificing some of our interests. Therefore, after receiving your salary, you will be able to choose to donate a certain proportion of the salary to a charity. You can also choose to keep it yourself. Note: If you choose to donate, your name and donation amount will be listed on the donation list."

CU

In the CU experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

"In order to increase the company's revenue and attract more customers, employees and investments, our company will implement social corporate responsibility and gain a better social image by donating to a charity. Therefore, after receiving your salary, a certain proportion of the salary will be forced to be donated to a charity."

CP

In the CP experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

"As a company committed to creating more social value and seeking more benefits for employees, we will implement social enterprises, although this means sacrificing some of our interests. Therefore, after receiving your salary, a certain proportion of the salary will be forced to be donated to a charity."

MU

In the CU experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

"In order to increase the company's revenue and attract more customers,

employees and investments, our company will implement social corporate responsibility and gain a better social image by donating to a charity. Therefore, after receiving your salary, you will receive extra money as a reward for your hard work.”

MP

In the CU experimental bureau, subjects will receive the following prompts before starting each group of photos:

“As a company committed to creating more social value and seeking more benefits for employees, we will implement social enterprises, although this means sacrificing some of our interests. Therefore, after receiving your salary, you will receive extra money as a reward for your hard work.”

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