Understanding the Concept of Doubled Suffering in Capitalist-Oriented Organizations

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Abstract

In compassion literature, suffering is typically described as an undeniable reality in organizational life. While compassion literature has described the assessing sub-process as informing whether an individual will respond compassionately or not, there are fewer insights regarding the relationship between a non-response and suffering. This study seeks to understand the suffering experience from the employee's perspective by interviewing 26 managers and non-managers from various industries. The results indicate that when individuals perceive their suffering as being ignored, this exacerbates their suffering. The preliminary finding suggests that continuing business-as-usual and doing nothing in the face of an employee's suffering can "double" their suffering.

Introduction

Organizations are seen as harboring the emotions, pain and suffering of individual members (Dutton, Lilius, & Kanov, 2007; Nolan, Diefendorff, Erickson, & Lee, 2022). As such, suffering is considered ubiquitous in organizations (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014). As an existential threat, suffering occurs when the concrete meaning to one's personal existence is challenged (Reich, 1989).

In the management literature, compassion is a means by which an employee's suffering can be alleviated. The four sub-processes of noticing suffering, feeling empathic concern,

assessing whether to respond, and acting compassionately co-occur within the social architecture that supports the enactment of organizational compassion to alleviate suffering (Kanov, Powley, & Walshe, 2017; Simpson, Farr-Wharton, & Reddy, 2020). Compassion is based on innate caring (Gilbert, 2020), building compassion capability (Lilius, Worline, Dutton, Kanov, & Maitlis, 2011), having felt obligation to act courageously (Kanov et al., 2017), or having empathic concern (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). However, within the context of organizations oriented towards capitalism, George (2014) suggests that a desire to maximize economic interests can unintentionally cause suffering rather than alleviate it.

In other words, besides harboring employee suffering, organizations may also induce suffering in its members (Kanov, 2021). In particular, members in organizations under capitalist societies who have the ability to respond with compassion might not do so (George, 2014), given that capitalism values self-interest, competition and market exchange, consumerism, achievement through extrinsic motivation and individualism (Friedland & Cole, 2019; George, 2014). The prioritization of profit, organizational performance and productivity may risk diminishing the selfless and interpersonal aspects of compassion (Araújo, Simpson, Marujo, & Lopes, 2019). Although literature has described compassion as alleviating suffering (Simpson et al., 2020), less is known about what happens if organizational members do not act to alleviate suffering when they are aware of the suffering.

While the medical literature does explore the phenomenon of suffering being denied (Iskandar, Rochmawati, & Wiechula, 2021; Ueland, Dysvik, Hemberg, & Furnes, 2021), more research is needed on how suffering in organizations can be handled and ultimately alleviated (Kanov, 2021). Drawing on interviews to understand the subjective experience of employee suffering, this paper seeks to explore the denial of employee suffering in organizations. When an

employee's suffering experience is denied, this 'doubled suffering' (Rehnsfeldt & Eriksson, 2004) in the form of exacerbating the suffering experience of an employee is worth further study.

Literature Review

Suffering

As a whole person experience (Kahn & Steeves, 1986), suffering is an existential threat to the concrete meaning of one's personal existence (Reich, 1989; Ueland et al., 2021). This threat to one's sense of self happens when an instance of pain or injury disrupts the individual's intactness as a person (Kanov, 2021). Suffering is based on the individual's interpretation of the injury as a threat to one's sense of self (Kahn & Steeves, 1986). The self contains an organization of different attributes, otherwise known as personhood (VanderWeele, 2019). Personhood is seen as conveying universal worth and moral standing, accompanied by inalienable human rights (Fleischer, 1999; White, 2013). When an individual has personhood, the destruction of the person is wrong (Tooley, 2009). For a suffering individual, their perceived existential threat calls into question the continuance of their identity, where their "self" might be extinguished some way.

Sources of suffering from within the organization (Chen & Köhler, 2022) can take the form of events that potentially create injury to one's self such as job loss, organizational changes, poor performance review ratings, or extensive work schedules without any breaks (Kanov, 2021). Pain associated with these different events may range from anxiety, anger, depression, fear, insomnia to burnout (Dutton et al., 2014). On the other hand, suffering isn't the constant organizational change itself, but the negative meaning the individual associates with the organizational change that relates to their self-identity (Chen & Köhler, 2022). When employees cannot construct

meaningful identities due to the constant changes (Driver, 2007), they may feel inadequate because they fail to keep up with the performance demands from the organizational changes.

While suffering is connected to the conventional ways that workplaces are structured (Kanov, 2021), managers can be dismissive of an employee's suffering experience in organizational life. Employees may emotionally, cognitively and physically distance themselves from work due to a manager's poor leadership style (Afrahi, Blenkinsopp, Fernandez de Arroyabe, & Karim, 2022). Individuals have a basic need to have their presence validated; therefore, small, mundane acts on an ongoing basis can affirm or deny the existence of the person's humanity (Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2016). Each act, or lack thereof, has a potential to convey to an employee their sense of worth (Dutton et al., 2016). Increased suffering occurs when an individual's experience of suffering is denied, thus exacerbating their original suffering experience (Iskandar et al., 2021). A manager's lack of responsiveness to suffering may exacerbate suffering for an already suffering employee. However, little is understood in terms of how denial of suffering occurs an organizational context.

Responding to suffering in a capitalist-oriented context

Managers can be influenced by their organizational context when making sense of an employee's suffering. In a business setting, a manager's appraisal whether to alleviate the suffering may include the consideration of the money, time and penalties incurred when expressing compassion (Banker & Bhal, 2018). Decisions regarding an employment relationship are considered ethical if they maximize utility by producing the greatest benefit for the least cost and foster an individual's freedom (Budd & Scoville, 2005). Managers may decide to help the sufferer only if enhances overall organizational objectives or their own productivity (Banker & Bhal,

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2018). While a focus on self-interest and competition doesn't negate the desire people have for intimate relationships, it does diminish "transcendent, self-less, empathic behavior that help create optimal experiences of love and friendship" (Kasser, Kanner, Cohn, & Ryan, 2007, p. 67).

Being inherently pessimistic about human nature, economic theories assume people are untrustworthy and need to be prevented from harming the organization (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 85). When management uses a dominant frame of reference, such as capitalism, it legitimizes managerial authority and persuades employees that managers are better at determining employment policy (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2017). Pirson (2019) suggests that "an economistic paradigm neglects ethical, social and developmental aspects of human nature" (p. 41). To facilitate an ethical analysis of the employment relationship, it's important to determine whether shared interests are genuine, or whether employees are expected to share their employer's interests. When capitalism is the dominant frame of reference, this unitarist view of the employment relationship assumes what is good for the organization economically is also good for the employees (Van Buren, 2022). Evidence suggests that when individuals are primed with an economic schema, it reduces their compassion (Molinsky, Grant, & Margolis, 2012). Consequently, managers may carry out tasks that intentionally cause harm to another human in service of achieving a greater good or purpose (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008). For example, the greater good in implementing a layoff is to improve organizational performance.

An organization's practices can cause harm to a person's sense of dignity, or "intrinsic, unconditional value" (Sokol-Hessner, Folcarelli, & Sands, 2015, p. 551). Inherent dignity means individuals, as human beings, have a right to self-respect as well as respect from others (Bal & de Jong, 2017; Hodson, 2001). Treating individuals with respect and not undermining individual autonomy are two ethical standards Greenwood (2002) suggests for managing employees.

Respectful treatment maintains dignity by signaling an individual's intrinsic value as irreplaceable (Pirson, 2019; Pirson, Goodpaster, & Dierksmeier, 2016; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Repeated and consistent experiences with an organization in terms of respectful treatment potentially stabilizes a person's respect schema and their sense of self within that context (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Even after experiencing an episode of harm, if employee's dignity is preserved or enhanced, it can provide the "sense of identity people need in order to get on with life" (Margolis, Grant, & Molinsky, 2007, p. 244). Thus, human dignity can either be denied, protected or promoted (Pirson, 2019).

When individuals are seen as an instrumental means to accomplish an organization's goals, their dignity is ignored (Bal & de Jong, 2017; Pirson et al., 2016). Their sense of intrinsic worth is devalued and re-conceptualized as an instrumental resource to achieve a goal (Bal & de Jong, 2017). Thus, when an individual is treated merely as an instrumental resource, it prompts them to question the concrete meaning of their personal existence, which may lead to their suffering (Reich, 1989). If employees are viewed as an instrumental means to the organization's ends, the possibility employees may experience a threat to their sense of self is neither contemplated nor considered important. Acting to alleviate suffering acknowledges another person's humanity and their potential for suffering.

In sum, it is suggested that organizations can in certain instances induce suffering in employees (Kanov, 2021). This paper focuses on how the employee's interpretation of their organization's actions creates the individual's suffering experience. By understanding the employee's perception and how it connects to a threat to their sense of self, it can illuminate how their suffering might be exacerbated when they interact with their managers. This approach leads to the following research question: How do organizations exacerbate employee suffering?

Method

This study views suffering as a subjective (VanderWeele, 2019) and socially constructed experience. Therefore, I adopt a social constructivist ontology where suffering is influenced by other social actors (Bryman, 2012) and multiple realities can exist based on the relativity of each social context (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2020). The influence of others is taken into account for this reality, where there is a connection between one individual's meanings and the other person's meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This study sought to learn how suffering is constructed by the participant's mind in the context of interactions with other people, meanings, etc. (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Thus, by using an interpretivist lens to investigate this suffering experience, one can understand the complexity of human sensemaking by uncovering the meanings that participants assign to suffering within a business context (Klein & Myers, 1999).

Participants were recruited from personal networks by contacting them via email, LinkedIn, Facebook, and text messages. 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted, along with 6 follow-ups for clarification. Participants were managers with direct reports (14), and non-managers (12), with work experience spanning 3 to 30+ years. They comprised 19 females and 7 males. Participants represented various industries in Australia and America to provide a variety of workplace contexts and illuminate potential theoretical concepts containing "strategic similarities" across the various categories (Glaser & Strauss, 2017, p. 56). The different industries represented included: construction, energy, chemical, food production, healthcare, manufacturing, marketing, professional services (i.e. law, medicine, financial, HR, software), and telecommunications.

Participant interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom, lasting approximately 1 to 2 hours. Interview questions centered around various management practices to illuminate potential tensions amongst business practices and suffering. The interviews were semi-structured and followed McCracken's (1988) interview principles such as grand-tour questions, planned prompts, playing dumb to avoid making assumptions about the participant's interpretations, and allowing time for participants to tell their own story. A semi-structured interview allowed me to follow-up on interesting and unexpected points the participants provided, while at the same time utilizing a common protocol as a starting point to solicit information (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Participants reviewed transcripts of their video-recorded interview to confirm accuracy. QSR International's NVivo 12 program was used to manage and code the data for analysis. Participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. I employed a bricolage approach to analyze the interviews by moving freely between different analytical techniques (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) to create coherent connections between the research question, data and theory (Pratt, Sonenshein, & Feldman, 2022). I initially looked through the interviews to get a sense of dominant themes for my preliminary data analysis (Pratt, 2000). I then identified incidents of suffering related to a business practice (e.g. layoff, performance review, policy implementation). Within that suffering incident, I created initial codes and subthemes (e.g. profit and productivity → Mgmt justification for action; control, identity, effort → Threat mechanisms).

After the initial coding, I interrogated the data with different concepts and themes from the suffering literature (Hargreaves, 1993). I refined my codes by adding (e.g. undesired, pain event), partitioning (e.g. loss → loss of a good, loss of a habit), subsuming particulars to the general (e.g. general self, personhood → threat to self) or combining (e.g. expressed suffering + ignored suffering → doubled suffering) codes to create relationships between the initial codes (Miles,

Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I then clustered the codes (Miles et al., 2014) to create higher level

relationships (e.g. suffering definition, suffering process) to relate the lower level codes together

(Sonenshein, 2014). Because the majority of the suffering literature has been based on a medical

setting where participants were seriously ill or dying (Kahn & Steeves, 1986; Rodgers & Cowles,

1997; VanderWeele, 2019), not all concepts fit with my data. Where theoretical concepts did not

apply, I created new ones (e.g. challenges) (Hargreaves, 1993). See Figure 1 for the analytic

coding process.

I used memo writing to organize my thoughts regarding the codes, and reflected on how

they connected to each other throughout the coding process (Lempert, 2007) to determine their

logic and coherency (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Overall, I constantly engaged with different

theoretical concepts and the data (Hargreaves, 1993) to understand employee suffering within an

organizational context. Through this iteration, the concept of doubled suffering emerged as a

subset of the data. Although the examples of doubled suffering were just a few, the rich description

of the suffering incidents painted a picture of how participants interpreted organizational responses

to their suffering.

Figure 1. Analytic coding process for Doubled Suffering

First Order Concepts	Second Order Concepts	Third Order Concepts	Aggregate Dimension
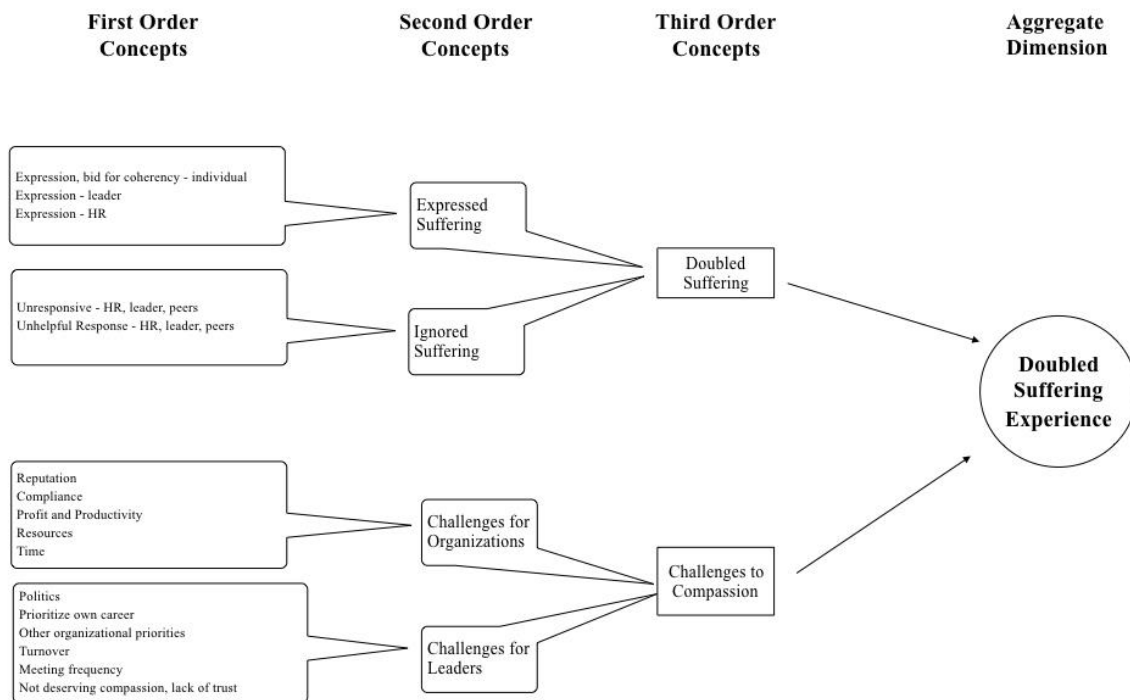
Source: Author's own

Findings

Initial Expression of Suffering

In the following examples, the participants expressed their dismay about a situation either directly (Melanie) or indirectly (Andrew). Melanie expressed to her supervisor the department needed new wheelchairs.

> ***It's just a known fact that if you ask for something, you probably won't get it.*** *So everyone just doesn't ask. It's a shame we feel that way. Maybe we shouldn't feel that way. But you know, like me,* ***personally, I've gone to my NUM [nurse unit manager] like so many times to ask for things.*** *(Melanie, Manager)*

Andrew made a bid to express his concerns by requesting regular meetings. However, his manager ignored his requests.

> *When I was first hired, I put - for most of the first six months that I was at the institution - a series of meetings on my manager's calendar…**And almost without exception, those would be canceled without comments**… There was usually a reason, you know…And so sometimes…he was stuck in upper management meetings, and just didn't have that time at that time, or whatever…I did feel that I put this on your calendar a month ago, **I'd really like this to go up. And then it didn't….I [wanted] more frequent feedback** than an annual performance review.. (Andrew, Employee)*

Cassell (2004) suggests that an aspect of our sense of self is based on the roles we perform. For Melanie, not having a working wheelchair frustrated her sense of self in terms of her ability to do her job properly and been seen as a competent nurse. She wanted to be seen as doing her job well with the proper equipment, but not having wheelchair with working wheels threatened her sense of self.

> *It's **frustrating because it doesn't allow you to do your job properly**. Half the time you're like, 'oh, sorry, we're missing the wheels. I don't know where they are,' like when you're transporting patients and stuff. And **it kind of makes me embarrassed in a way, apparently, we're the world's leading class hospital**. You can't even have like simple frickin' wheelchairs that have legs.. (Melanie, Manager).*

Cassell (2004) suggests that another aspect of our sense of self is tied to our actions. People know themselves and are known by their actions. For Andrew, he knew his self that was good at concrete thinking was being threatened because he was expected to act as if he were an abstract thinker. Not having regular meetings to get feedback from his supervisor frustrated his ability to accomplish the expected tasks.

> ***I am not a particularly abstract thinker**. I don't necessarily know a lot of things, like how to plan for architectural change kinds of things. And so sometimes I would be given projects, where it was sort of an open-ended, you know, create a plan for x. **And I would not have a very good idea of what the required parts of that are**…and so again, that's the kind of thing*

> *that **I would have preferred to have more conversations with my manager - what do you need the systems to do?** … And **I freely admit that that is a personal failure. I am much more of a mechanic than an architect.***

Doubled Suffering

When individuals suffer and their bid to have their suffering understood is ignored by organizational members, they are denied their suffering experience. Camille and Lanie provide examples of how they experienced additional suffering due to denial of their initial suffering experience. The first example of doubled suffering is a quote from Camille, who describes how she initially suffered due to her president's actions she perceived as slandering her reputation as a self who can do quality work and be trusted.

> *And so the **President… accidentally hit 'Reply All'** when she responded to this. She said, 'Well, I don't have time to fill out the survey. **I don't have a problem with any of the medical directors except Camille because she doesn't like to attend meetings'… this email went out to almost the entire company**. And the thing is, I found out about this not because [the President] told me, not because my manager … told me, not because HR told me, but because a concerned coworker called me to make certain I was okay **after being slandered like that**. (Camille, Employee)*

Cassell (2004) suggests that one's personality and character is an aspect of one's identity. Camille is concerned that her character of being a good worker was harmed. Camille thinks of herself as someone who cares about work quality and is trustworthy, and the president's email did not reflect that aspect of her in the same way. HR's subsequent response to Camille prioritized sweeping the matter under the rug, thus invalidating Camille's suffering. Her identity as a high quality and trustworthy employee continued to be threatened, and HR's response demonstrated to Camille that her right to be seen as a high quality, trustworthy person amongst her peers did not matter.

> *I requested a meeting with HR. And then **HR said that they knew about the email because [the President] contacted them** as soon as she realized she hit Reply All. And what HR told me was that they had counseled [the President] to do nothing, because they're hoping that I wouldn't find out*

about it. And we could just sweep it under the rug. And… HR just said that to me, seriously? **They just told me 'Oh, yeah, well, we knew about it. But we decided not to tell you**, *because we're just hoping you wouldn't find out about it and we sweep it under the rug.' And I was just like, you realize that there are a lot of people in this company,* **a lot of new salespeople whom I have yet to meet, and whom I have not worked with yet**. *And so they don't know the type of employee that I am.* **They don't know the quality of my work. And this has just biased them against me**. *And you don't think that this could affect my ability to do my work well, when we have people who are now* **not going to trust me** *because they've heard negative feedback about me.* **And HR is just like, 'Oh well, people are really busy. And people didn't read that email**.' *I'm like, it's an email from the president of the group. You honestly are telling me that you think that most people didn't read that email.* **I was just like, HR you suck. Seriously, this is so blatant. It's…the fact that they were just straight up telling me 'Oh, yeah, we knew about it, but we just decided not to tell you.'…**I don't **I honestly don't think HR cares at all** *about the employees seriously. And… that's just really, really stings (Camille, Employee)*

A second example comes from Lanie, who was charged with leading her technicians to install phone lines based on daily targets. She motivated her employees to achieve the difficult targets, but they still failed to complete their work. This situation negatively impacted her sense of self in terms of personality and actions because she wanted to be known as an achiever. However, when the targets became even more impossible to reach for her technicians, they complained to her.

My people mostly worked residential and installed phone lines…Because you have to allow people time to drive from point A to point B….so the load was 80%. My people were being loaded at 90%. And I did not know that because the loading happens outside of me, like I get the printout. But I got a call from someone who said, **'Hey, Lanie, I think you should know something that you're being set up. Your people are being overloaded.' The consequence of that was my people weren't finishing their work in the workday**. *Before I got there, they were finishing their work in the workday. After I got there, and* **they ticked up my load to 90, they started to not finish**. *Because I didn't know this at first, I thought I need to get on it. And so I was out in the field, and I'm motivating them… And I was like I'm gonna support you and meet your loads and blah, blah, blah. And then they met them.* **Then they uptick my load to 100%, which was impossible**. *But I didn't know that this was going on.* **I thought, I'm slipping. And being the overachiever that I am, you know, I was doing everything because I was very likeable**. *[...] So then it got to 100%. And it was just impossible. And*

> *one of my technicians, he said 'Lanie, look at the sheet. There is no way…*
> *I don't care how much you offset the things that are not part of this, this will*
> *not happen, it will not happen.' (Lanie, HR)*

Lanie went to her supervisor and her supervisor's supervisor, and both ignored her concerns because they did not believe her. Consequently, Lanie was required to discipline her technicians for poor performance. The unhelpful responses from her supervisors exacerbated Lanie's suffering. She still could not be the "achieving self" to meet her targets. Moreover, she was expected to punish her own employees for their "poor" performance. Her supervisors' response demonstrated to Lanie that her right to be seen as a fair supervisor was not important.

> *And so, **I complained that I'm being overloaded.** And I didn't have the*
> *power to change my loading, or at least I didn't know how. And so I decide*
> *that I'm going to go to my supervisor. **And my supervisor was not too keen***
> ***on having this conversation. So I went to my supervisor's supervisor.** And*
> *I said I need my loads to be at 80% like everybody else that works this job.*
> ***And he said, 'Lanie, you're making this stuff up. That doesn't happen**.'*
> *I'm like, I got proof. I got the printout right here...**And he really didn't***
> ***believe me or didn't want to do anything…So now, I'm in a situation***
> ***where I have to discipline the people who aren't meeting performance***
> ***expectations**…And **I felt bad because I'm writing people up for something***
> ***that is impossible**. And they know it and I know it. **And I'm screaming it***
> ***from the mountaintops, but no one's listening**. (Lanie, HR)*

Regardless of the position the interview participants held within the organization, they described their suffering being met by a lack of action from their organizational leaders. This denial of suffering occurred when participants bid to express their suffering or when the employee directly expressed their suffering. The lack of action by the leaders signaled to the employees that their dignity was not important. Therefore, their suffering went unalleviated, along with other consequences. During a follow-up with Camille, she indicated she had quit her company. Lanie said in her interview that her company fired her for not meeting performance expectations.

Leaders must find ways to ensure financial viability of their organizations as they strive to accomplish organizational objectives. These participant examples demonstrate that investor

interests, who contribute financial capital, appear more important than the human capital that managers and employees provide (Ghoshal, 2005). I suggest that when organizational leaders fail to respond to employee suffering, they default to established concepts that shape how they interpret situations (Kudesia, 2019). Concepts contain typical features of the situation with a dominant response which can preclude considering other ways of responding (Kudesia, 2019). Ray, Baker, and Plowman (2011) describe mindlessness as an over-reliance on established repertoires of behaviors and past concepts that promotes a fixation on a single perspective, without considering how things could be done differently.

In the participant examples, concepts organizational leaders might default to include the primacy of shareholder value, employees as not being worthy of trust, or efficiency. Camille felt that HR believed it was more efficient to sweep Camille's concerns aside. Lanie felt her supervisors deemed her concerns not worthy of trust and having an impossible standard of productivity was acceptable. While Andrew's (Employee) suffering was expressed more indirectly and ignored through cancelation of one-on-one meetings, he rationalized that his supervisor prioritized the use of his time to attend upper-level management meetings over meeting with Andrew.

I suggest when organizational leaders do nothing to address the suffering participants express, from the individual's perspective, it "doubles" their suffering by exacerbating it. According to Rehnsfeldt and Eriksson (2004), when a suffering individual shares their suffering, the individual may start to see a way out of their suffering where they don't always feel their suffering is unbearable. However, ignoring the suffering denies the individual their experience of suffering. Suffering increases when it is concealed or unspoken (Iskandar et al., 2021). In Camille and Lanie's cases, their suffering increased because the resulting identity they feared would be

portrayed to other organizational members could lead to a loss of respect for them as a trusted coworker or a fair supervisor. For humans to be disconnected from others is suffering (Cassell, 1991). In an organizational context, the findings suggest that when the individual does not feel their expressed suffering is ameliorated, their suffering continues unabated.

Discussion

This study contributes to the understanding of how suffering might not be alleviated in the context of capitalist-oriented organizations. The preliminary findings suggest that there is a point where organizational leaders make a choice whether to respond to suffering once they have made sense of it (Kanov et al., 2017). The choice whether to act to alleviate the suffering goes beyond appraising whether the sufferer deserves compassion or whether the focal actor has the self-efficacy to respond to the sufferer (Atkins & Parker, 2012). As George (2014) points out that even when organizational members have resources to act with compassion, they may not do so.

In the study, participants perceived their leaders to continue operations as normal and not alleviate their suffering, even when the organization was the original source of suffering for the employee. The findings suggest that leaders facilitate doubled suffering when they failed to challenge taken-for-granted organizational concepts or economic concepts (Kudesia, 2019) to respond to the particular instance of suffering. They simply carried on business-as-usual.

This paper contributes to the suffering literature (Kanov, 2021; Rehnsfeldt & Eriksson, 2004) by suggesting that if organizational leaders uphold established concepts such as efficiency and employee untrustworthiness in the face of expressed employee suffering, it likely increases their contribution to the employee's suffering experience. Choosing to ignore suffering risks propagating harm to employee dignity, to the detriment of both the suffering employee and the

organization. Haidt (2003) proposes compassion as one of several moral emotions that either responds to moral violations or cares for the welfare of others.

If suffering harms the intactness of an individual's personhood, when organizational members choose not to respond to the suffering in their employees, they are potentially allowing moral violations to continue at the cost of the employee's dignity. This paper also contributes to compassion literature (Dutton et al., 2014; McClelland & Vogus, 2021; Vogus & McClelland, 2020) by suggesting that a non-response to suffering can short-circuit the compassion sub-processes and become a pain trigger for additional suffering experiences. Because the preliminary findings are limited to a few examples, future research can further explore the concept of doubled suffering in organizations to verify these findings.

On a practical level, it is suggested that supervisory training be expanded to focus on bringing awareness through self-reflection of what type of concepts they might hold onto that prevent supervisors from responding to suffering others. The training can delve into the organizational leader's own suffering if they were to challenge business-as-usual. The training can also help the leader to express their concerns, as well as create new meaning in the face of those threats to their sense of self. If leaders can mindfully choose how to respond to employee suffering, they will be open to pursuing other options to respond compassionately. Thus, leaders can respond more effectively to alleviate the expressed suffering.

Conclusion

When capitalist-oriented organizations are a source of suffering in employees, the lack of compassionate response from organizational leaders has the potential to exacerbate an employee's suffering. A perceived non-response from an organizational leader increases the likelihood of

doubling the employee's suffering experience. Suffering is not necessarily ubiquitous in organizations; whether suffering is perpetuated can be a choice. Therefore, choosing compassion to alleviate suffering, rather than defaulting to business-as-usual, is a vital component for maintaining an ethical organizational life.

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