



Journal of Managerial Psychology

Emerald Article: Theory and research on social issues in organizations

Kimberly M. Lukaszewski, Dianna L. Stone

Article information:

To cite this document: Kimberly M. Lukaszewski, Dianna L. Stone, (2012), "Theory and research on social issues in organizations", Journal of Managerial Psychology, Vol. 27 Iss: 4 pp. 324 - 329

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683941211220216>

Downloaded on: 18-05-2012

References: This document contains references to 25 other documents

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by

For Authors:

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service. Information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Additional help for authors is available for Emerald subscribers. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

With over forty years' experience, Emerald Group Publishing is a leading independent publisher of global research with impact in business, society, public policy and education. In total, Emerald publishes over 275 journals and more than 130 book series, as well as an extensive range of online products and services. Emerald is both COUNTER 3 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.



Theory and research on social issues in organizations

Kimberly M. Lukaszewski

State University of New York at New Paltz, New Paltz, New York, USA, and

Dianna L. Stone

University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas, USA

Abstract

Purpose – The primary purpose of this article is to raise awareness about the need for additional theory and research on social issues in organizations. It also provides an introduction to the Special Issue, and a description of the articles in it.

Design/methodology/approach – The article highlights the social challenges facing individuals, organizations, and society in the twenty-first century. It also suggests that many worldwide challenges have been accompanied by some of the most significant research contributions in applied psychology. As a result, the authors argue that researchers in the field often have unique knowledge and skills that can be applied to solve some of these challenges.

Findings – The article notes that additional theory and research is needed to help alleviate some of the social challenges that organizations and their members face in the twenty-first century.

Research limitations/implications – The article offers suggestions for generating new research ideas that can be used to ameliorate the problems facing individuals, organizations and society as a whole.

Practical implications – The article argues that knowledge in applied psychology can be used to deal with the challenges facing society as a whole.

Social implications – The article also indicates that research on social issues is needed to address many of the challenges faced in today's world.

Originality/value – The article provides a unique contribution to the literature in applied psychology because it raises awareness of the need for additional theory and research on social issues in organizations.

Keywords Social issues, Unfair discrimination, Persons with disabilities, Racial minorities, Differential validity, Virtue theory, Accent biases, Mentoring, Occupational psychology, Organizational behaviour

Paper type Viewpoint



A recent review by Cascio and Aguinis (2008) revealed that about 4 percent of articles published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* between 1963 and 2007, and 6 percent of those in *Personnel Psychology* focused on social issues. Given these findings, we believe that additional theory and research is needed on social issues in the field of applied psychology. We are also confident that researchers in the field have a great deal of knowledge about these issues that may be used to solve some of society's problems. For instance, there is a growing concern about the ethics of organizational and political leaders, and our understanding of leadership (e.g. Yukl and Van Fleet, 1991) may be used to enhance the degree to which these individuals behave in ethical ways. In addition, many societies underutilize the talents and skills of women, ethnic minorities,

older workers, and people with disabilities. Applied psychologists have many insights about organizational justice (Greenberg and Colquitt, 2005) and prejudice (Dipboye and Colella, 2005), and this expertise can be applied to increase the inclusion of out-group members. However, research is needed to examine the strategies that organizations and societies might employ to meet these goals.

Likewise, the recent worldwide financial crisis has resulted in high levels of job loss and unemployment, and we believe that scholars in applied psychology should use their understanding of training (e.g. Goldstein and Ford, 2002), motivation (e.g. Locke and Latham, 2004) or career development (e.g. Hall, 1990) to address these issues. In the 1970s researchers in this field published a series of articles on methods that might be used to help the “hard core unemployed” gain access to jobs (e.g. Friedlander and Greenberg, 1971; Goodale, 1973; Goodman and Salipante, 1976). Similar research is needed today to assist those who have experienced long-term unemployment created by the decline or relocation of businesses. Similarly, there has been a rise in poverty levels around the world, and knowledge in applied psychology might be used to reduce poverty rates. It merits noting that a recent Special Issue of *Journal of Managerial Psychology (JMP)* focused on how this knowledge can be used to reduce poverty around the world (Burt and Carr, 2011). Finally, individuals in all societies are experiencing greater stress levels which often result in health problems and increased health care costs. Researchers in applied psychology have an understanding of the causes of stress (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Sonnetag and Frese, 2003; Tetrick, 2002) that might be used to enhance the well being of all individuals in society.

Overview of articles in the Special Issue

Given the many challenges facing individuals, organizations, and society today, this Special Issue was designed to foster research on social issues in applied psychology. In particular, it consists of five articles including two studies that focus on strategies for increasing the inclusion of people with disabilities (Barclay *et al.*, 2012) and racial minorities (Robinson and Reio, 2012). It also highlights the results of two studies that focus on unfair discrimination in the hiring (Hosoda *et al.*, 2012) and layoff processes (Dwyer and Zeiter, 2012). Finally, it includes one study that examines differential validity or the degree to which race moderates the relation between cognitive ability test scores and job performance (Gardner and Deadrick, 2012). Each of these articles will be briefly described below.

The first article was written by Lizabeth Barclay, Karen Markel, and Jennifer Yugo, and is titled “Virtue theory and organizations: considering persons with disabilities”. These authors provide a very insightful perspective on how organizations might facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities. In particular, they apply virtue theory to explain how organizations can develop a culture of support and respect for all persons. In particular, virtue theory emphasizes that organizational members should stress empathy, compassion, and the common good, and these values will contribute to the overall level of positivity in the environment. As a result, the focus on the common good should help people with disabilities remain in the organization because all individuals are valued in a virtuous environment. In addition, the emphasis on virtue should help organizational members deal with the accommodations that may be needed by people with disabilities. Furthermore, the authors contend that in a virtuous organization supervisors exhibit good citizenship behaviors that include empathy,

courage and compassion, and these behaviors should benefit all members of the organization. As a result, the development of a virtuous organizational culture should provide the support that people with disabilities need to display their talents, and enjoy a satisfying work life. We urge everyone to read this article because it is very refreshing and uplifting view of organizations.

The next paper by Megumi Hosoda, Lam Nguyuen, and Eugene Stone-Romero is titled "The effect of Hispanic accents on employment decisions". This study provides a very unique contribution to the literature on unfair discrimination because it focuses on how foreign accents influence employment related decisions. In particular, the study examined the effects of applicant accent (Standard American-English and Mexican-Spanish) on employment-related judgments and hiring decisions. The results revealed that an applicant with a Mexican-Spanish accent was rated as less suitable, and less likely to be hired for a software engineering job than one with an Standard American-English accent. These findings suggested that foreign accents may have a negative impact on Mexicans' or Mexican-Americans' employment-related opportunities. We believe that accent biases are harmful to all individuals, but they are particularly damaging to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans because members of these groups are often stereotyped more negatively than other groups in US society (Stone-Romero *et al.*, 2002). We are confident that readers will find this article interesting because so little research has focused on accent discrimination in organizations.

Donald Gardner and Diana Deadrick wrote the third article, and it is titled "Moderation of selection procedure validity by employee race". This study adds a very important contribution to the literature because it is the first to examine race as a moderator of selection procedure validity over an extended period of time. The authors collected data on race, cognitive ability, psychomotor ability, and previous work experience from 932 sewing machine operators in the USA. Performance data were collected over nine months at three points in time. The results indicated that race moderated the criterion-related validity of cognitive ability tests over the three time periods, but it did not moderate the validities for psychomotor ability test scores or previous work experience. Interestingly, the findings revealed that cognitive ability was a better predictor of performance for black than white employees, and that the relationship increased in strength over time. These results were quite surprising, and the authors provided several explanations for them. We believe that the study adds value to the literature because it emphasized that employers should examine the degree to which race or other factors (e.g. gender, age, disability) moderate the relations between cognitive ability test scores and job performance. In addition, very little research has examined differential validity in recent years, and we hope that these results will renew an interest in research on the topic.

The fourth paper, by Dale Dwyer and Morgan Arbelo, is titled "The role of social cognition in downsizing decisions". This study sheds light on how layoff decisions are made in organizations. In particular, the authors assessed the factors that are related to downsizing decisions, and the findings revealed that older and minority employees were chosen more often for lay offs than those who were younger and members of minority groups. The results also indicated that job performance was not related to lay off decisions, but rater group membership in terms of race, gender, and age were significant predictors of these decisions. Given the growing numbers of layoffs in

organizations, we believe that the results of this study come at a critical time, and suggest that organizational decision makers should use caution when using personal characteristics rather than job performance to determine who will be laid off. One reason for this is that personal characteristics are typically unrelated to job performance, and the use of these types of data may violate extant civil rights laws (e.g. Civil Rights Acts 1964, 1991; Age Discrimination in Employment Act, 1967). In addition, it may be detrimental to the long-term effectiveness of organizations.

The final article in the Special Issue is by Davis Robinson and Thomas Reio, and is titled “Benefits of mentoring African-American men”. Considerable research has focused on the benefits of mentoring as a means of attracting, motivating and retaining employees in organizations (e.g. Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Kram, 1983, 1985; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). However, there has been much less research on mentoring of African-Americans. As a result, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature because it examined the relationship between mentoring, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among African-American males. The results indicated that job satisfaction and organizational commitment were higher for those who were mentored versus those who were not. We believe that this study is very important because it provided support for a strategy that can be used to enhance the satisfaction and retention of minority group members. However, research is needed to examine the degree to which mentoring is effective for other out-group members (e.g. racial and ethnic minorities including Hispanic-Americans, Native-Americans, women, and people with disabilities). For example, we believe that mentoring may be particularly helpful for Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans because their cultural values are different than those of the dominant culture in the USA. As a result, they may not always know the role-related expectations in Anglo-American organizations (Stone-Romero *et al.*, 2003).

Conclusion

In summary, we hope that you enjoy reading the articles in this Special Issue, and want to encourage all readers to submit their research on social issues to *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. Although the journal publishes articles on topics related to industrial and organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management, we also welcome papers that focus on issues facing society as a whole. We believe that applied psychology has a great deal of knowledge that can be used to address the challenges facing organizations, individuals, and our society (e.g. poverty, bullying, job loss). As a result, *JMP* plans to emphasize these and other social topics in future issues of the journal.

A lot of people made this Special Issue possible, and we want to express our sincere appreciation to all authors who submitted papers, and the reviewers who spent countless hours evaluating them. We also want to include a very special thank you to Kay Wilkinson who provided the support needed to make the issue possible, and Nancy Rolph, the publisher of *JMP*, who offered encouragement at every step of the way.

References

- Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2007), “The job demands-resources model: state of the art”, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 22, pp. 309-28.

- Barclay, L.A., Markel, K.S. and Yugo, J. (2012), "Virtue theory and organizations: considering persons with disabilities", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 330-46.
- Burt, C.D.B. and Carr, S.C. (2011), "Organizational psychology and poverty reduction: the multi-dimensionality of the aid worker experience", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 26 No. 6, pp. 444-52.
- Cascio, W. and Aguinis, H. (2008), "Research in industrial and organizational psychology from 1963 to 2007: changes, choices, and trends", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 93, pp. 1062-81.
- Dipboye, R.L. and Colella, A. (2005), *Discrimination at Work: The Psychological and Organizational Bases*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
- Dwyer, D.J. and Arbelo, M. (2012), "The role of social cognition in downsizing decisions", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 383-405.
- Eby, L.T. and Lockwood, A. (2005), "Protégés and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: a qualitative investigation", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 67, pp. 441-58.
- Friedlander, F. and Greenberg, S. (1971), "Effect of job attitudes, training, and organization climate on performance of the hard-core unemployed", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 55, pp. 287-95.
- Gardner, D.G. and Deadrick, D.L. (2012), "Moderation of selection procedure validity by employee race", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 365-82.
- Goldstein, I.L. and Ford, J.D. (2002), *Training in Organizations: Needs Assessment, Development and Evaluation*, 4th ed., Wadsworth Thomson Learning, Belmont, CA.
- Goodale, J.G. (1973), "Effects of personal background and training on work values of the hard-core unemployed", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 57, pp. 1-9.
- Goodman, P. and Salipante, P. (1976), "Organizational rewards and retention of the hard-core unemployed", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 61, pp. 12-21.
- Greenberg, J. and Colquitt, J.A. (2005), *Handbook of Organizational Justice*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
- Hall, D.T. (1990), "Career development theory in organizations", in Brown, D., Brooks, L. and associates (Eds), *Career Choice and Development: Applying Contemporary Theories to Practice*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 422-54.
- Hosoda, M., Nguyen, L.T. and Stone-Romero, E.F. (2012), "The effect of Hispanic accents on employment decisions", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 347-64.
- Kram, K.E. (1983), "Phases of the mentor relationship", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 26, pp. 608-25.
- Kram, K.E. (1985), *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*, Scott Foresman, Glenview, IL.
- Locke, E.A. and Latham, G.P. (2004), "What should we do about motivation theory? Six recommendations for the twenty-first century", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 29, pp. 388-403.
- Ragins, B.R. and Cotton, J.L. (1999), "Mentor functions and outcomes: a comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 84, pp. 529-50.
- Robinson, D.M. and Reio, T.G. Jr (2012), "Benefits of mentoring African-American men", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 406-21.

-
- Sonnentag, S. and Frese, M. (2003), "Stress in organizations", in Borman, W.C., Ilgen, D.R. and Klimoski, R.J. (Eds), *Comprehensive Handbook of Psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 12, Wiley, New York, NY, pp. 453-91.
- Stone-Romero, E.F., Stone, D.L. and Hartman, M. (2002), "Stereotypes of ethnic groups: own versus assumed views of others", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Toronto.
- Stone-Romero, E.F., Stone, D.L. and Salas, E. (2003), "The role of culture on work-related scripts and role taking in organizations", *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, Vol. 52, pp. 328-62.
- Tetrick, L.E. (2002), "Individual and organizational health", in Ganster, D. and Perrewe, P.L. (Eds), *Research in Organizational Stress and Well-being*, Vol. 3, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, pp. 107-41.
- Yukl, G.A. and Van Fleet, D.D. (1991), "Theory and research on leadership in organizations", in Dunette, M.D. and Hough, L.M. (Eds), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 2, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA, pp. 147-97.

About the authors

Kimberly M. Lukaszewski is an Associate Professor of Management at the State University of New York at New Paltz. She received her MBA in Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS), and her doctorate in Organizational Studies from the University at Albany. Her research focuses on electronic human resources, privacy, and diversity issues. Her research has been published in such journals as *Human Resource Management Review*, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *Journal of Business Issues*, and *Business Journal of Hispanic Research*. She has made numerous presentations at annual meetings at the Academy of Management, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, the Eastern Academy of Management, and the International Association for Human Resources Information Management. Kimberly M. Lukaszewski is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: lukaszek@newpaltz.edu

Dianna L. Stone received her PhD at Purdue University, and is now a Professor of Management at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her research focuses on diversity in organizations, electronic human resource management, privacy, and reactions to selection techniques. The results of her research have been published in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Management*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. She is a Fellow of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, the American Psychological Association, and the Association for Psychological Sciences. She is also the Editor of *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.