

Introduction

Professor Nurmohamed's research operates primarily within the organizational behavior realm and broadly examines how prior experiences of adversity affect motivation, success, and peer attitudes in the workplace. While the work that was accomplished this summer was quite varied in its nature, there was a common theme of the "flipside." That is, the unexpected or unusual positive outcome of phenomenon such as low expectations in the workplace, that current behavioral literature predicts to have negative effects. In this way, the research seeks to contribute to the theory of "underdogs," or individuals who use previous negative experiences to channel their own motivation to succeed.

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Methods and Design

Due to the qualitative nature of the field, the majority of the data was collected through surveys that were built using Qualtrics and later launched on mTurk or Prolific. Additionally, because the purpose of this underdog narratives project was to further prove effects of discrimination that had already been observed in prior studies, there was already a model from which the newer surveys were to be created. This model included a measure of discrimination, characterized as "high" if participants scored above a certain threshold, and "low" if they scored below. In addition, participants were to be randomly assigned to one of four workshop conditions: an underdog, high expectations, neutral (life) and control.

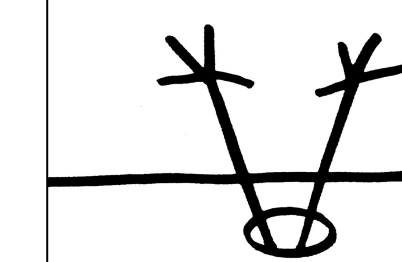
The underdog narratives were collected both in writing and in an audio format, although this differed across survey versions. For example, the first version of the survey did not include an audio narrative portion, nor did it include a written narrative portion for the pure control condition because the research team did not think it necessary. After the first round of responses were collected, the team examined these different factors to understand why the data quality was poor. One suggestion was that the lack of a written narrative could have led to response bias that negatively affected the survey results, since it seemed that a disproportionately high number of "bad" participants were providing quick and inaccurate responses in the control condition. When the third version of the study was done and the results still weren't as expected, the research team decided to add in an audio narrative portion to closer align the fourth version to the original study, and thus produce more similar results.

Given the current circumstances created by COVID-19, including an overall increase in anxiety and negative feelings, as well as high unemployment and greater usage of the mTurk platform by new participants and/or bots, there were a multitude of potential confounding factors that the team attempted to control for across study versions. While the results certainly seemed to align more with the researchers' expectations in the later versions of the survey, the team was not able to produce data that aligned with the original results. More specifically, the effects of discrimination on individuals that were perceived in the preliminary study were still observed in the later versions, but with a much weaker correlation.

Related Projects

In addition to the underdog narratives/discrimination project, the Flipside Collective Team also worked on an alternate choice study that sought to examine the perception of alternate choice candidates by third parties. While it was expected that alternate choice candidates would be perceived more poorly than their first choice counterparts, the research team wanted to see if this was the true effect. To do this, a survey was created in which participants were asked to choose a team member to help decipher

"Doodles," a type of visual riddle (see image below) and come up with a list of creative ice cream flavors. Participants were randomly assigned to either their first or second choice partner, and asked to



evaluate their partner's performance in the post-workshop questionnaire. This is still currently an ongoing project.

Discussion

Above all, this research demonstrates the importance of studying the "flipside" effects of seemingly negative phenomena on how feelings such as motivation, discrimination, and inequality play out in the workplace. While both the underdog narratives and discrimination study, as well as the alternate choice study, were not able to be completed in the given timeframe, they certainly yielded interesting results that reflect, in part, the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 crisis on employees and organizations, in addition to academia at large.