



Regulatory focus and safety outcomes: An examination of the mediating influence of safety behavior



Samuel Aryee^{a,*}, Hsin-Hua Hsiung^b

^a King's College London, Department of Management, 150 Stamford Street, London SE1 9NH, UK

^b Department of Business Administration, National Dong Hwa University, Shoufeng, Hualien 97401, Taiwan

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 September 2015

Received in revised form 24 November 2015

Accepted 17 February 2016

Keywords:

Regulatory focus

Safety initiative

Unsafe behavior

Safety-related events

Injuries

ABSTRACT

We proposed and tested a model of the relationship between regulatory focus, safety behaviors, and safety outcomes. Specifically, we hypothesized regulatory foci (promotion and prevention) to relate to the safety outcomes (safety-related events and injuries) through safety behaviors (unsafe behavior and safety initiative). Data were obtained at two time points 6 months apart from frontline firefighters and their supervisors drawn from New Taipei City Government. The results of multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) revealed that promotion focus related to safety-related events and injuries through safety initiative while prevention focus related to safety-related events (but not injuries) through unsafe behavior. Our findings reinforce the utility of distinguishing between safety behaviors and outcomes as well as the role of a motivational framework in understanding workplace safety.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

1. Introduction

The high human and financial costs of workplace accidents, injuries, and fatalities (International Labour Organization, 2014; World Health Organization, 1995) have given much impetus to research on workplace safety (Barling et al., 2002; Beus et al., 2015; Burke et al., 2002; Burke and Signal, 2010; Christian et al., 2009; Clarke, 2012; Hofmann and Stetzer, 1996; Nahrgang et al., 2011; Neal et al., 2000). The observation that workplace injuries and fatalities stem from human error has led to a growing adoption of a behavioral approach (Smith et al., 2003; Specht et al., 2006) to research on workplace safety. Two widely researched safety-related behaviors are safety compliance or “the core activities that individuals need to carry out to maintain workplace safety” and safety participation or “behaviors that do not directly contribute to an individual's personal safety but that do help to develop an environment that supports safety” (Neal and Griffin, 2006, p. 946). Research has since documented the influence of both safety compliance and safety participation on safety outcomes such as reduced accidents and injuries (Christian et al., 2009; Clarke, 2012; Neal and Griffin, 2006).

Despite the widespread acceptance of safety compliance and safety participation, it is increasingly recognized that they do not

adequately capture the spectrum of safety-related behaviors. Two safety-related behaviors that we examined in this study are unsafe behavior and safety initiative. Unsafe behavior describes “behaviors that subject individuals or the workplace to greater physical threat or harm whether intentional or unintentional” (Beus et al., 2015, p. 2). In contrast, safety initiative describes “the extent to which members of the workgroup take informal initiatives to improve the safe execution of their work as well as make suggestions to and exert pressures on the supervisor for improving the work environment's safety” (Marchand et al., 1998, p. 115). Simard and Marchand's (1994) finding that safety initiative constitutes a major influence on accident prevention underscores scholarly efforts to more comprehensively conceptualize safety-related behaviors and understand their antecedents and outcomes (Beus et al., 2015; Burke et al., 2002; Christian et al., 2009; Hofmann et al., 2003; Kark et al., 2015; Zacharatos et al., 2005).

Research has consistently distinguished between distal and proximal antecedents to safety-related behaviors (Beus et al., 2015; Burke and Signal, 2010; Christian et al., 2009; Clarke, 2012; Wallace and Chen, 2006). However, the distinction between safety-related behaviors and safety outcomes (Christian et al., 2009) suggests that research that aims to understand safety outcomes must examine the role of motivation in engendering safety-related behaviors and ultimately, safety outcomes. Consequently, we focus in this study on examining the mediating influence of safety-related behaviors on the relationship between regulatory focus and safety outcomes. Regulatory focus describes

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: samuel.aryee@kcl.ac.uk (S. Aryee), hsiumg@mail.ndhu.edu.tw (H.-H. Hsiung).

goals pursued by an individual and the strategies that regulate action toward the attainment of these goals (Higgins, 1997).

By pursuing this objective, we contribute to the workplace safety literature in two ways. First, we extend prior research by examining safety-related behaviors in terms of safety initiative and unsafe behavior. Although behavioral safety research has recognized both unsafe behavior (Beus et al., 2015; Hofmann and Stetzer, 1996) and safety initiative (Hofmann et al., 2003; Kark et al., 2015; Marchand et al., 1998; Simard and Marchand, 1995), they have been under-examined relative to safety participation and safety compliance (Christian et al., 2009; Clarke, 2012; Neal and Griffin, 2006). As Beus et al. (2015, p. 2) noted, examining these behaviors “provides a broader representation of the content domain of safety-related behavior.” Second, while prior research has examined the influence of regulatory focus on safety-related behaviors (mainly safety compliance) its influence on safety outcomes has rarely been examined (Lanaj et al., 2012). We therefore extend prior research by examining the preceding two safety-related behaviors as underlying mechanisms through which regulatory focus influences safety outcomes. Additionally, we build on prior research by highlighting the potential role of promotion focus not only in promoting safety-related behavior (Kark et al., 2015) but also in reducing safety outcomes such as injuries.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

Regulatory focus theory (RFT) is underpinned by the hedonistic principle of avoiding pain and seeking pleasure which is manifested in the self-regulatory systems of prevention and promotion. As Higgins (1997, p. 1282) observed, regulatory focus describes the different ways that individuals approach pleasure and avoid pain. In effect, these regulatory foci reveal differences in preferences in terms of goals, motives, and outcomes that motivate individuals (Brockner et al., 2004). Promotion focused individuals tend to be motivated by nurturance needs, hopes and aspirations, and success in accomplishing these goals. Consequently, such individuals pursue strategies or behaviors that are aligned with their ideal selves thereby enhancing the significance of the goals to be attained. In contrast, prevention focused individuals tend to be motivated by safety and security needs. They therefore tend to align themselves with their sense of duty and responsibility which magnifies the salience of minimizing losses or avoiding potential loss (Shah et al., 1998). Although both regulatory foci emphasize the goal of minimizing the gap between current and future state, they adopt different behavioral strategies. While promotion focused individuals tend to be proactive and thrive in challenging contexts that foster learning and development in contrast, prevention focused individuals pursue goal attainment by being careful

and conforming to rules thereby avoiding mistakes and losses (Higgins, 1997, 1998).

Drawing on RFT and as shown in Fig. 1, we posit that because promotion focused individuals tend to be proactive and seek developmental opportunities promotion focus will influence safety initiative. In contrast, because prevention focused individuals are preoccupied with safety and conformance prevention focus will influence unsafe behavior rather than safety initiative. We also posit that these safety-related behaviors will influence the safety outcomes of safety-related events and injuries suggesting that the two self-regulatory systems or foci will indirectly relate to the safety outcomes through the safety-related behaviors they engender.

2.1. Regulatory foci and safety behaviors

As previously noted, we adopted a two-dimensional conceptualization of safety-related behaviors defined in terms of safety initiative and unsafe behavior. Safety initiative reflects an employee's efforts to contribute to the formulation of safety rules and regulations beyond compliance with these rules and regulations. Although it is reflected in such discretionary safety-related behaviors as safety participation and safety-oriented organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), safety initiative connotes initiative taking that goes beyond behaviors that may not directly contribute to workplace safety but that contribute to fostering an environment that supports safety (Griffin and Neal, 2000). Specifically, safety initiative entails such behaviors as making safety-related recommendations, trying to change the way the work is done to make it safe, and exerting pressure on management to improve workplace safety. We expect promotion rather than prevention focus to relate to safety initiative.

Promotion focus is underpinned by a tendency to take initiative and to engage with the environment in order to change aspects of it. Consequently, promotion focused individuals tend to have an exploration orientation which enables them to recognize and seek novel safety situations. The elements of self-starting, proactive, and persistence in the face of barriers that characterize proactive work behavior (Crant, 2000; Griffin et al., 2007) will appeal to promotion focused individuals. This is because the defining elements of proactive work behavior provide an opportunity for such individuals to implement their ideal selves through the challenge of engaging with a novel safety situation. In support of our arguments, prior research has reported promotion focus to positively relate to safety initiative (Kark et al., 2015) as well as to such discretionary change-oriented behaviors as creative behavior (Neubert et al., 2008).

Hypothesis 1a. Promotion focus positively relates to safety initiative.

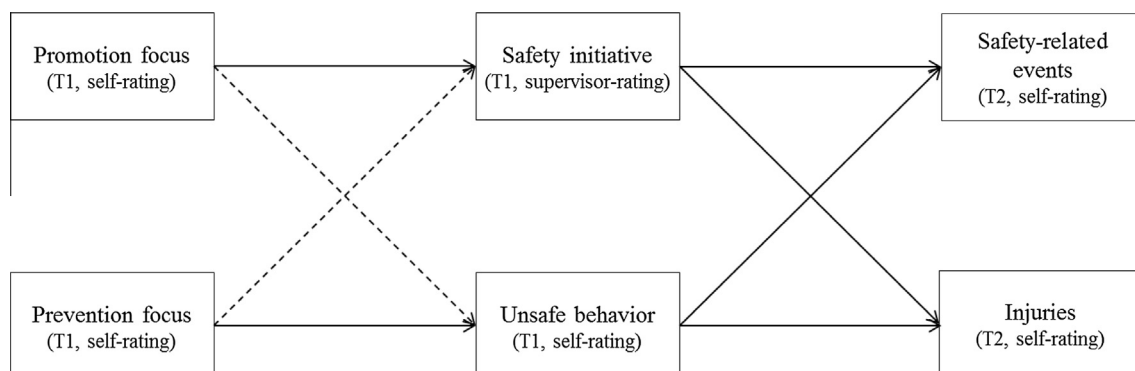


Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6975343>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6975343>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)