

Vicarious or Direct? Testing Experiences of Interpersonal Deviance and Employees' Defensive Strategies at Work

Abstract

The interpersonal deviance (ID) literature has mainly relied upon the conservation of resource (COR) theory that explains the dissemination of stressful cues. While literature concerning resource investment decisions at work exists, how and when individuals enter defensive mode is a relatively less researched area. We investigate the effects of two forms of interpersonal deviant experiences, namely, vicarious ID and direct ID that results in self-serving behavior – a defensive withdrawal. We analyzed two-wave of 346 subordinate-supervisor pairs. Multilevel path modeling exhibited an indirect effect from direct ID to self-serving behavior via communion striving. On the other hand, there was no indirect effect of vicarious ID on self-serving behavior via communion striving. The results reveal that direct ID is a crucial factor in explaining defensive strategies at work, whereas the effects of vicarious ID are contingent upon certain boundary conditions. Given that, findings show vicarious ID was positively related to communion striving for employees with low relational identification and high susceptibility to emotional contagion. We offer new insights into ID and COR literature by providing important implications for theory and practice.

Keywords: Interpersonal deviance; conservation of resource theory; communion striving; relational identification; susceptibility to emotional contagion.

Introduction

Interpersonal deviant behaviors intend to harm other individuals at work through verbal abuse, sexual harassment, blaming, or gossiping about co-workers, etc. (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). The occurrence of interpersonal deviance (ID) to one's self (Michalak et al., 2019) refers to the *direct experience of ID* while the ID experiences resulting from witnessing or hearing about such incidents from peers refers to vicarious ID (Ferguson & Barry, 2011). When employees directly experiences or observe the prevalence of ID, it causes stress (Nesse et al., 2007) and hinders well-being and social connections (Gunia & Kim, 2016; Michalak et al., 2019; Wellen & Neale, 2006). The lack of energy to deal with these stressors means that employees' self-defensive strategy (strategy to conserve resources) is crucial for dealing with deviant experiences. While research concerning stressful experiences and its impact on defensive strategy exists (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011, 2015), most of this literature has assessed them in the context of helping behaviors without considering the individuals' need to conserve resources for self. Thus, we argue about the importance of defensive strategies and in particular the mechanism leading to self-serving behaviors.

While literature concerning resource investment decisions at work exists (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015), how and when individuals enter into aggressive defensive strategy and defensive withdrawal is the least researched area (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 105). According to COR theory, employees invest energies in resources which they value (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Hobfoll, 2001). We used COR theory because it highlights how individuals build and secure resources under resource-threatening experiences (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Hobfoll, 1989). Using experiencing ID, we extend extend COR and lend support to its predictions concerning the 'defensive strategies' individuals adopt on

declining resources (Hobfoll, 2001). While the existing literature emphasizes cognitive dissonance (Gunia & Kim, 2016) and group dynamics (Ferguson & Barry, 2011; Wellen & Neale, 2006), we focus that resource availability and resource signals influence the effect of experiencing ID. Hence, we focus on relational identification with peers and susceptibility to emotional contagion as boundary conditions for the effects of experiencing ID.

Communion striving is an aggressive¹ form of defensive strategy which enable employees to become more defensive in their resource investment strategies' on losing resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106): a motivational goal (Bakan, 1966) helps in strengthening social connections and acceptance from peers (Barrick et al., 2002; Stewart & Barrick, 2004). We considered communion striving as a mechanism that is expected to play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between employees experiencing ID and self-serving behaviors. Communion striving involves "energy directed at obtaining acceptance in personal relationships and getting along with others" (Barrick et al., 2003, p. 44). It enables employees to build connections to cope with the resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106) which in itself require energy. Here, communion striving is a suitable strategy because it helps in dealing with stressful experiences (Barrick et al., 2002; Chiaburu et al., 2007; S. Zhang et al., 2019) resulting in immediate buffer for stressful experiences (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007) but at later stages it can lead to defensive withdrawal.

Employees incline toward defensive withdrawal to conserve resources for themselves through self-serving behaviors (SSB). SSB is a form of self-fulfilling behavior with intention to gain benefits for the self (Dubois et al., 2015). This is significant because a defensive withdrawal in form of SSB can subside employees' stress (Dubois et al., 2015), making involvement in this

¹ Aggressive responses are "built-in evolutionary strategy that search for alternative survival or adaptation strategies that on their face or from experience do not seem adaptive" (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106).

behavior more likely. The choice of exhibiting SSB is a safe option after experiencing ID as this defensive withdrawal can be instrumental in conserving new resources for self under declining resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The tendency towards SSB is dependent on certain other resources.

These resources can be job resources or resource signals. We focus on job resources because relational identification with peers captures one's ability to internalize norms. These norms are important in defining relationships better than any other resource because they act as standards for building relationships (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Although relational identification has in general more potential to internalize standards and norms that define a relationship and assess oneself accordingly (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), this does not mean they always strive for communion. However, because employees' low relational identification makes them more vulnerable to threatening experiences (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), we believe them to be more vigilant in developing communion when their relational identification with peers is low.

Additionally, resource signals² are equally important in determining employees' defensive strategy. We believe that considering susceptibility to emotional contagion as a resource signal is more appropriate to the present context as it captures "excessive awareness of and sensitivity to the behaviors and feelings of others" (Boyce & Parker, 1989, p. 342). It is not itself a resource because it is dependent on the experiences and emotions of others. It is a signal that investing certain resources will facilitate employees in achieving more resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Susceptibility to emotional contagion enhances sensitivity to social cues, concerns regarding the statements and behaviors of others, and fear of negative responses

² Susceptibility to emotional contagion is not itself a resource because it is dependent on the experiences and emotions of others. It is a signal that investing certain resources will facilitate employees in achieving more resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

from others (Boyce et al., 1993). Because susceptibility to emotional contagion makes a difference in how employees apprehend vicarious cues, we focus on it as an important component to shape the effects of vicarious ID.

Further, we offer theoretical contributions to workplace deviance literature. The literature shows the effects of the prevalence of deviant behaviors (Ferguson & Barry, 2011; Gunia & Kim, 2016; Michalak et al., 2019; Wellen & Neale, 2006; H. Zhang et al., 2015). Although negative effects such as a threat to social fabric (e.g. group cohesion) (Wellen & Neale, 2006), increased dissatisfaction, and involvement in interpersonal deviance (Ferguson & Barry, 2011; Michalak et al., 2019) are studied, less is known about how, when and under what conditions experiencing ID (i.e., vicarious or direct) shapes defensive strategies. We highlight the dynamics of how employees' deviant experiences become more (or less) self-serving within the context of their relationships with peers. 2) In doing so, we integrate between-person defensive strategies and provide an extension of COR for the experiencing ID literature by simultaneously account for vicarious and direct ID. 3) Overall, we emphasize the complexity of employees' defensive strategies for experiencing ID and show that, through communion striving, experiencing ID initiates employees' self-serving tendencies.

The study is comprised of the following sections: theory development, methodology, analysis, results, and discussion. The details on each of these sections are provided below.

Experiencing Interpersonal Deviance (Direct and Vicarious) and SSB

Self-serving behavior (SSB) is subtly and covertly executed to the intention to gain self-benefits (Merritt et al., 2012; Zahid et al., 2019). The individuals involved in SSB attempt to gain self-interest at the cost of peers or organizations. We contend that on experiencing ID, SSB as defensive withdrawal plays significant to conserve resources.

We argue that experiencing ID increases SSB. The stress transmits to the observers and negatively affects their valued resources (Chen et al., 2015). When interpersonal resources are valued by employees, experiencing ID is likely to threaten their resources. For instance, vicarious ID negatively affect employees' perceptions because they disturb the social fabric of the organization (Wellen & Neale, 2006). Likewise, because direct ID relates to increased negative emotions and fear of negative consequences (Michalak et al., 2019), direct ID emanates stress. Thus, an effort to deal with the resource loss may result in a specific instance of SSB. Accordingly, we propose that experiencing ID is positively related to SSB.

***Hypothesis 1:** The vicarious ID (1a) and direct ID (1b) are positively associated with self-serving behaviors.*

Experiencing Interpersonal Deviance (Direct and Vicarious) and Communion Striving

Aligning with COR theory, the research further proposes that communion striving influences the direct positive link between experiencing ID (vicarious ID and direct ID) and SSB.

Communion striving is an aggressive form of defensive mechanism where employees strive to protect and build their resources. However, this defensive mechanism cannot be explained solely by employees' experiences, such as vicarious ID or direct ID, as it requires additional job resources. To explain this, we draw on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002) which asserts that job resources counterbalance the effects of resource loss (e.g., experiencing ID) on individuals' defensive mechanism, i.e., communion striving in our case.

The stress transmits to observers and affect their resources (Chen et al., 2015), specifically when observers value these resources. Defensive mechanism helps to protect the resource loss from vicarious ID and direct ID (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106). Direct ID instigates

dissatisfaction among employees and forms the basis of their response to the mistreatment of ID (Michalak et al., 2019). For instance, on experiencing ID, employees seek acceptance in the social systems and situations to accumulate resources (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007) such as getting along with others (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013). Communion striving also provides an opportunity to these employees who are experiencing resource depletion and are looking for ways to seek acceptance and build further resources. This defensive strategy of securing resources through communion striving requires resource investment initially (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015). However, after adequate resource investment, communion striving becomes a valuable resource for the employees. Likewise, vicarious ID triggers thoughts of resource depletion, which employees deal with through indulging in defensive modes, such as communion striving.

Among these two forms of experiences, direct ID enables one to sense an event more closely than vicarious ID. We claim this because distal experiences impact less than closer experiences (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Thus, employees' direct ID will generate high net resource accumulation than vicarious ID. Hence, we hypothesize that:

***Hypothesis 2:** The experience of ID is positively associated with communion striving. This relationship holds for both vicarious ID (2a), and direct ID (2b), however, the effects of direct ID on communion striving are predicted to be stronger than that of vicarious ID (2c).*

Relational Identification as Boundary Condition

We further suggest that relational identification as a boundary conditions influence employees' defensive mechanisms by protecting resource loss. Relational identification refers to the self-concept in terms of role relationships (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Brewer and Gardner (1996) referred to it as who one is, i.e., "the self-concept derived from connections and role

relationships with significant others”. The concept deepens the understanding of attachment at work (Ashforth et al., 2016) among coworkers to coworkers, peers to peers (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000), or supervisor and coworkers (Sluss, Ployhart, Cobb, & Ashforth, 2012).

Relational Identification: A moderator for the effects of vicarious/ direct ID on communion striving.

We expect the relationship between experiencing ID and communion striving to be positive for low relational identification and negative when relational identification is high. Using COR theory, we suggest that relational identification is a resource buffer that mitigates the effects of resource loss because of ID for the following reasons. First, given the importance of relational self at work, individuals define themselves in their relationship with their peers (Ashforth et al., 2008; Brewer & Gardner, 1996) as a desirable job resource. Due to high relational identification, employees feel less threatened by ID. The strong connection with peers act as buffer and help to disregard the negative ID experiences with more credence to close relationships, friendship, and empathy (Thompson & Korsgaard, 2019). Thus, employees high in relational identification do not see ID as a potential threat to their resources. Thus they disengage from protecting and build their resources.

Contrarily, low relational identification with peers may accentuate the effects of experiencing deviant acts. Low relational identification depicts lack of buffer to dissociate resource threats from vicarious ID and direct ID. Employees with low relational identification mount resilient relationships on facing adverse experiences with the intent to protect previous and build new resources through communion striving. For instance, employees involve in communion striving despite experiencing ID to maintain work relationships (Thompson & Korsgaard, 2019). Thus, this leads us to the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 3.** Relational identification moderates the relationship between 3a) vicarious ID and communion striving, 3b) direct ID and communion striving such that these relationships are positive for employees with low relational identification and negative for employees with high relational identification.*

Moderation of Emotional Contagion

Just as relational identification is expected to act as a moderator, we expect emotional contagion - the extent to which individuals may catch others' emotions unconsciously - as another significant moderator between vicarious ID and communion striving. Emotional contagion catches others' emotions because these emotions are influenced by others and not in control of a person himself. Under this, individuals tend to "automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, and movements of others". These factors prompt emotional experiences similar to those of emotional displayers (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994, p. 5; Petitta & Jiang, 2020). Therefore, we identified emotional contagion as an important factor that affects the relationship between vicarious ID and communion striving.

We suggest that the effects of vicarious ID on communion striving will be more positive for those with high susceptibility to emotional contagion. According to Ilies, Wagner, and Morgeson (2007), emotional contagion impacts the affective linkages among employees. Employees' high susceptibility to emotional contagion allows them to pay close attention to reading others' emotions and are more interconnected (Doherty, 1997). These characteristics create increased awareness among individuals, in so doing, increase their understanding of what is happening in their work settings (Boyce et al., 1993; Mast, Jona, & Hall, 2009). Consistent with COR, individuals' ideology to invest in developing a social connection with others in the face of vicarious ID will overpower them. Although vicarious ID affects all employees,

employees high on emotional contagion are likely to be more conscious of the vicarious ID and hence the ones more affected. This increased awareness enhances the effects of vicarious ID on communion striving. Based on high emotional contagion, employees are likely to invest more in communion striving because they may perceive signals that investment in resources would help in resource accumulation (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 4: Susceptibility to emotional contagion moderates the positive relationship between vicarious ID and communion striving such that the relationship is positive for employees with high susceptibility to emotional contagion than for low emotional contagion.

In addition to the effects of vicarious ID explained earlier, we expect the effects of direct ID on communion striving to be insignificant. Our argument comprises on the nature of ‘direct ID’ measuring first- hand experiences of deviant behaviors by employees. Given that direct exposure to the experiences as more influential, the effects of observations or experiences of others would then be irrelevant. Emotional contagion, which explains the phenomenon of vicarious emotional responses (Doherty, 1997), cannot shape the effects of direct experiences. Thus, we do not expect emotional contagion to moderate the relationship between direct ID and communion striving (shown in supplementary analysis).

Self-serving Behavior (SSB) as a Behavioral Defensive Mechanism

We expect that experiencing ID is resource threatening which engages employees in communion striving – a mechanism that in itself requires resource investment. After building sufficient communion, employees defensively build interpersonal connections where those who aim to build resources for the self would then invest in fulfilling their motives at work. They do so with their prime concern to survive at work by creating new resources for themselves (Hobfoll

et al., 2018) and to re-affirm their identity at work (Gunia & Kim, 2016). We, therefore, expect that primarily employees enter into an aggressive defensive mode to recover and build resources through communion striving, while later entering into a different investment decision to pass stress by engaging in SSB. These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5- Communion striving indirectly effect the positive relationship between 5a) vicarious ID and self-serving behaviors, and 5b) direct ID and self-serving behaviors.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

Data were collected from organizations representing different industries, including banking, e-commerce, engineering, education, food, and fertilizers, in Pakistan. Human resource (HR) departments of these organizations were contacted to convey the purpose of the study and request them to participate. Using English language, the surveys were administered from multiple organizations to ensure the generalizability of results and to enhance variability in responses (Ostroff, 2007). To reduce common method variance (CMV); data were collected in intervals (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012) and also comprised of subordinate-supervisor dyads (Bauer, Swenson, Griffa, Mariano, & Owens, 1998).

Of the 481 distributed surveys, 429 responses were received at Time 1 and 346 subordinate-supervisor pairs completed the surveys at Time 2. There was an interval of two weeks. To match employees' responses between Time 1 (T1), Time 2 (T2); and to their supervisors at T2, an identification number was allotted. Employees' names were communicated to supervisors along with the ID to avoid confusion. At T1, employees' demographics, vicarious ID, direct ID, relational identification with peers, and susceptibility to emotional contagion were

measured. At T2, employees' responses on communion striving and supervisor's perceptions of their subordinates' self-serving behaviors were assessed.

Of these 346 subordinates, 74.3 percent were male, with an average age of 30.02 years ($SD = 5.32$). Their average organizational tenure was 4.49 years ($SD = 3.62$), and 2.7 years ($SD = 2.13$) of working experience with their direct supervisors. 91.92 percent had a bachelor's degree or above. Of the 163 matched supervisors, 85.8 percent were male, with an average age of 36.3 years ($SD = 7.05$) and their average organizational tenure was 7.2 years ($SD = 5.45$). 97% of these supervisors had a bachelor's degree or above.

Measures

For independent and dependent variable, we use 1 = never, to 5 = more than once a week while for rest of the scales we used (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Vicarious ID. Vicarious ID (McDonald's $\omega = 0.87$) was measured by seven items of Ferguson and Barry's scale (2011) who adopted this scale from Bennett and Robinson's (2000). Respondents were asked, "How often in the last 6 months have you learned from another person (a coworker or a subordinate) that someone in your team/organization engaged in the following behaviors?" (1 = never to 5 = more than once a week). Sample item includes: "said something hurtful to someone at work"

Direct ID. Direct ID (McDonald's $\omega = 0.78$) was assessed by seven items of Ferguson and Barry's scale (2011) who adopted the scale from Bennett and Robinson's (2000). Respondents were asked, "How often in the last 6 months have you directly experienced the following behaviors from your colleagues at work? Sample item includes: "acted rudely toward me at work."

Communion striving. Communion striving (McDonald's $\omega = 0.86$) was measured through nine items scale. The scale was developed from 'motivation orientation inventory' (Barrick et al., 2002), the sample item includes: "I focus my attention on getting along with others at work."

Susceptibility to emotional contagion. Susceptibility to emotional contagion (McDonald's $\omega = 0.86$) was measured through five items adapted from (Doherty, 1997) and one item added by Wu & Hu (2009) in the emotional contagion scale. In the anger dimension, items include "It irritates me to be around angry people", "I am tense when overhearing an angry quarrel at work", and "I clench my jaws and my shoulders get tight when I see the angry faces of colleagues" and one item added in the emotional contagion scale by Wu & Hu (2009) "I feel uncomfortable when overhearing a quarrel from my colleagues' office". The items in the fear dimension include "On watching the fearful faces of my colleagues, I try to imagine how they might be feeling", and "I notice myself getting tense when I'm around people who are stressed out".

Relational identification with peers. Relational identification (McDonald's $\omega = 0.84$) was measured through four items scale (Sluss et al., 2012). Sample item includes: "my relationship with my coworkers is an important part of who I am at work,"

Self-serving behavior (SSB). SSB (McDonald's $\omega = 0.91$) was measured through eight items scale developed by Zahid et al. (2019). Supervisors rate their employees' behavior e.g. "this employee presents ideas of colleagues as his own to get credit for them."

Controls. Following from previous research, age (Noval, Molinsky, & Stahl, 2018), hierarchy (Zahid et al., 2019), sector (private, public), and industry were taken as controls as they could affect SSB.

Analytical Strategy

The constructs for the present study were measured at an individual level. The responses of the supervisors were nested i.e. each supervisor rated the behaviors of 3-5 subordinates who report them directly. To control for these nested effects of the supervisor's response, we conducted hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) using Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). To assess the indirect effects of communion striving, we used 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) (5000) bootstrap samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) as it provides high statistical power and controls for Type-1 error.

HLM was used based on the criteria of within-person variance. As employees' tendency for SSB was reported by supervisors, intra-class correlation (ICC1) for supervisor's perception of employees' SSB was calculated. The dependent variable i.e. SSB exhibited a moderate amount of within-person variations, $ICC(1) = 0.51$, hence justifying the use of HLM with random intercepts for supervisors. To reduce the potential of multi-collinearity and simplify results interpretation (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), all variables excluding dependent variables were group mean-centered. We also conducted multilevel path modelling to test the full model.

Results

Measurement Model

To ensure model fitness, CFA was performed prior to hypotheses testing. Using ML estimator, a reasonable fit was assessed when the values of Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were closer to or exceed .90, RMSEA values lesser than .08 and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values closer to .06 (Bentler, 1990). Six factors model, inclusive of our focal constructs, showed an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(df=719) = 1434.02$,

$p=.000$, CFI = .90, TLI = .88, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05, by outperforming alternate models. For e.g. five-factors ($\chi^2 = 2194.14$, $df = 724$, $p=.000$, CFI = .78, TLI = .76, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .09, $\Delta\chi^2 = 760.11$, $\Delta df = 5$), four-factors ($\chi^2 = 3591.69$, $df = 729$, $p = .000$, CFI = .57, TLI = .54, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = 0.14, $\Delta\chi^2 = 1397.55$, $\Delta df = 5$), three-factors ($\chi^2 = 3667.98$, $df = 737$, $p=.000$, CFI = .56, TLI = .53, RMSEA = 0.11, SRMR = 0.13, $\Delta\chi^2 = 76.29$, $\Delta df = 8$) or a one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 5991.65$, $df = 740$, $p=.000$, CFI = 0.21, TLI = .16, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .17, $\Delta\chi^2 = 1399.66$, $\Delta df = 1$).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and composite reliabilities are shown in Table 1. Direct ID was positively correlated with communion striving ($r = .12$, $p=.022$) and SSB ($r = .11$, $p=.038$). In terms of controls; age, sector, and employee hierarchy were significantly correlated with at least one of our focal constructs; we hence controlled for these variables (Becker, 2005).

 Insert Table 1 here

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesized results are shown in Table 3. Model 1, 2, and 3 presents the estimates for vicarious ID. Model 4, and 5 present the results for direct ID. Hypothesis 1a and 1b postulates the positive link between experiencing ID and SSB. The results for both vicarious ID ($\beta=.07$, S.E=.06, $p=.227$) and direct ID ($\beta=.08$, S.E=.05, $p=.101$) (Table 2) revealed positive but insignificant direct effects with SSB. Hence, did not support hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2a postulates a positive relationship between vicarious ID and communion striving. After controlling age, sector, and hierarchy, vicarious ID exhibited no direct effect with

communion striving ($\beta=.01$, $S.E=.05$, $p=.831$), as shown in M1 in Table 3. Thereby hypothesis 2a was not supported. By contrast, M4 portrayed that direct ID was positively related to communion striving ($\beta=.12$, $S.E=.05$, $p=.019$), thus supporting hypothesis 2b. It shows that addition of one unit of direct ID increases communion striving by an amount of .12. The results suggest that the effects of direct ID on communion striving are stronger as compared to vicarious ID, hence supporting hypothesis 2c.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b postulate that relational identification with peers acts as a moderator for the relationship between 3a) vicarious ID and communion striving, and 3b) direct ID and communion striving. Specifically, we hypothesized that the effects of vicarious ID would be positive for employees with low relational identification and negative for employees with high relational identification. As shown in M2 in Table 3, moderation of relational identification with peers is significant ($\beta = -.12$, $SE= .05$, $p=.015$), thus supporting hypothesis 3a. Additionally, M5 displayed that relational identification moderates the positive relationship between direct ID and communion striving ($\beta = -.11$, $SE= .05$, $p=.027$), providing support for hypothesis 3b.

The graphs for this moderation were plotted on the criteria of ± 1 SD above and below the mean (Aiken & West, 1991) through assessing a simple slope analysis based on conditional effects. Plot A in Figure 2 revealed that vicarious ID was significantly and positively related to communion striving for employees with low relational identification ($\beta=.12$, $p=.012$) whereas its effects on employees with high relational identification were negative ($\beta= -.07$, $p=.026$). Meanwhile, plot B in figure 2 showed that the relationship between direct ID and communion striving was significant and positive for employees with low relational identification ($\beta=.31$, $p=.006$) while the effects were insignificant for employees with high relational identification ($\beta=.14$, $p=.115$). The results provide support for relational identification as an

influential job resource, where the relationship between experiencing both forms of ID and communions striving depends on relational identification, such that employees strive for more communion when low on relational identification.

Hypothesis 4 addresses the moderating role of susceptibility to emotional contagion in the effects of vicarious ID on communion striving. Results supported the moderation of emotional contagion in the vicarious ID-communion striving relationship, ($\beta=.12$, $SE=.05$, $p=.026$), supporting hypothesis 4 (M3 in Table 3). Figure 3 demonstrated that vicarious ID was more positively related to communion striving for those with high emotional contagion ($\beta=.10$, $p=.027$); whereas the relationship was negative for those low in emotional contagion ($\beta = -.02$, $p=.037$). The results reveal that vicarious ID enhances employees' drive toward increased communion only when they are highly susceptible to emotional contagion, while this tendency would reduce for employees with a low level of emotional susceptibility.

 Insert Figure 2 & 3 here

Hypothesis 5a and 5b hypothesize the mediation of communion striving for the relationship between vicarious ID and direct ID with SSB respectively. We found that the indirect effects of vicarious ID on SSB were insignificant (effect = .002, 95% bias-corrected CI = [-.02, .03]). While indirect effects of direct ID on SSB through communion striving (effect = .03, 95% bias-corrected CI = [.01, .07]) were significant and positive. The results do not support hypothesis 5a but provide support for 5b.

 Insert Table 2 & 3 here

Supplementary Analysis

We conducted a post-hoc analysis to assess the moderating effects of emotional contagion on the relationship between direct ID and communion striving. The results also evidenced that the moderation effect of emotional contagion for the direct ID-communion striving relationship was insignificant ($\beta=.09$, $SE=.05$, $p=.073$).

We further assessed moderated mediation results as a supplementary analysis. This allowed us to demonstrate relationships that were not hypothesized. We found indirect effects of vicarious ID and direct ID on SSB through communion striving in the presence of relational identification. The indirect effect of vicarious ID on SSB was positive and significant for low relational identification (conditional indirect effect = .03, $SE=.02$, $p=.042$, 95% CI = .03, .06) and insignificant for high relational identification (indirect conditional effect = -.02, $SE=.02$, $p=.233$, 95% CI = -.05, .01). Difference was significant (effect = .05, $SE=.03$, $p=.039$, 95% CI = .01, .10). Similarly, an indirect effect of direct ID on SSB was significant for employees' low RID, (conditional indirect effect = .04, $SE=.02$, $p=.031$, 95% CI = .01, .08) and insignificant for high relational identification (conditional indirect effect = .01, $SE=.02$, $p=.732$, 95% CI = -0.02, .03). Difference was significant (effect = 0.04, $SE=.02$, $p=.041$, 95% CI = .01, .08). The indirect conditional effects for emotional contagion were significant at 90% CI. Difference was significant (effect = -.04, $SE=.02$, $p=.075$, 90% CI = -.07, -.003).

Discussion

We build on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll et al., 2018) and investigated the moderating role of job resources and resource signals for the indirect relationship between experiences of ID and SSB through communion striving. Our results show that the indirect

relationship between vicarious ID and SSB (through communion striving) is when employees have low relational identification with peers and high susceptibility to emotional contagion. The indirect effect of direct ID on SSB (through communion striving) was positive and significant for low RID.

Theoretical Contributions

Despite the established relationship between ID experiences and its impact on negative emotions and social cohesion (Holm et al., 2019; Michalak et al., 2019; Wellen & Neale, 2006), a lack of research exists regarding the influence of experiencing ID on aggressive and withdrawal defensive mode. We have focused on this research gap by integrating a resource perspective in interpersonal deviant behaviors research.

First, consistent with COR theory (e.g. Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015), the present research has underlined the process through which experiencing ID impacts employees' defensive strategies. Our research goes beyond the previous literature by an attempt to comprehend the process under which 'employees may become more defensive in resource building and preservation on losing resources' (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 113). Extending this emerging line of COR research, results showed that the prevalence of direct ID and vicarious ID does not immediately involve individuals in SSB. The reason for these effects can be attributed to the importance of 'interpersonal experiences' as highly valuable resources for individuals. On perceiving interpersonal experiences as resource-threatening, rather than securing the resources for the self, individuals strive to accumulate these interpersonal resources first. This is evident in our study where results revealed that individuals enter into a seemingly aggressive defensive mode first to regain some resources through communion and later enter into a decision to defensive withdrawal by increased SSB. Besides, the data did not support the direct

relationship between vicarious ID and communion striving. The potential reason could be attributed to the observer's perception of vicarious incidents as less intense or harmful than incidents of direct ID. Furthermore, we perceive that the relationship is contingent upon certain factors such as the level of relational identification and the emotional sensitivity of the observer or the listener. Hence, the extent of relational identification and emotional sensitivity affects employees' decision to invest in resources. Our study has also contributed to the literature on COR theory by linking experiences of ID with employees' SSB, which previously was limited to the investigation of emotional exhaustion as a potential resource loss (Guerrero et al., 2021; e.g. Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015).

Second, we are first to simultaneously account for the effects of both i.e. vicarious ID and direct ID, specifically addressing how strategically defensive one can be on facing such experiences. The most significant findings are on theoretical insights driven by two different forms of ID experiences. Our research suggests that both forms can evoke changes in individuals' defensive strategies. Notably, the study advances the literature by demonstrating that direct ID has an immediate and strong effect on employee's defensive strategy than vicarious ID – which influences defensive strategy only under certain conditions.

Our results also reinforce that both experiences predict SSB differently. In doing so, we supplement the literature by suggesting that direct ID also influences employees' defensive mechanisms through preserving resources for self. This advances the literature which previously addressed linkages of direct ID with stress, dissatisfaction, emotions, and feelings (Michalak et al., 2019). We empirically extend these findings by introducing mediating and moderating mechanisms. Findings portray the role of moderation first, suggesting that direct ID enhances employees' communion striving particularly among those with low RID. The results for

mediation show that employees' SSB is indirectly influenced by direct ID via communion striving. Through these findings, we supplement the literature which evidenced that vicarious ID either indulges employees in work to reaffirm their identity (Gunia & Kim, 2016) or unfavorably influence the social fabric of the organization (Holm, Torkelson, & Bäckström, 2019; Wellen & Neale, 2006). Likewise, for the effects of vicarious ID – where an incident occurs far from individuals, the results support that resource investment is dependent on factors other than vicarious ID.

Third, the study outlines the conditions under which the effects of experiencing ID are more likely to develop communion striving, specified as an aggressive defensive mode. The findings add to prior studies that showed experiencing direct ID exhibit social support (Michalak et al., 2019) but did not suggest the conditions when the effects of these experiences can be maximized. Our research integrates COR theory and the concept of defensive strategies (Hobfoll et al., 2018), showing that both forms of experiences have a similar impact on employees' communion striving, depending upon their RID. For example, although experiencing ID may not lead to communion striving for those with high RID, but those with low relational identification feel threatened on experiencing ID of either type. When relational identification is high, employees do not feel threatened due to their already established role relationships which are sufficient to disregard their experiences of ID.

Furthermore, we found the effects of vicarious ID on communion striving through moderation of *'susceptibility to emotional contagion'*. The relationship between vicarious ID and communion striving is positive among employees with high susceptibility to emotional contagion. Employees with high emotional contagion are more sensitive to social cues (Boyce et al., 1993), hence may catch emotions through experiences of others (Doherty, 1997). The results

highlight that vicarious ID contributes to employees' defensive strategy, where it is essential to mitigate the effects of vicarious ID through resource accumulation. Contrarily, under low susceptibility to emotional contagion - employees remain indifferent about others' emotional state, resulting in limiting their resource accumulation despite vicarious ID. These findings extend the COR by providing empirical evidence on the ability to recognize resource signals as moderators, suggesting how experiencing resource depletion may nurture or limit resource conservation for self. These findings have also extended the literature on the effects of bystander deviance which informs that employees disentangle from groups that threaten their positive identity and social fabric at work (Gunia & Kim, 2016; Wellen & Neale, 2006).

Practical Implications

Our study carries important practical implications for managing experiences of ID at work. The current findings may provide insights for managers to minimize the negative effects of both vicarious and direct ID.

First, stemming from recent studies on vicarious ID showing that employees' vicarious ID can yield increased work effort by non-deviant members when they need to affirm their self-concept in groups (Gunia & Kim, 2016), our findings show the role of defensive strategies. We suggest that employees who strive for communion, later invest in themselves (e.g. SSB) that is manifested from experiencing direct ID and not vicarious ID. Given the effects of direct ID to be more powerful and immediate than that of vicarious ID, managers must be cognizant of such acts which drain employees' valuable intrapersonal and interpersonal resources. Second, in addition to emphasizing the strengthening effects of experiencing ID, managers may consider the role of relational identification as an inherent factor in facilitating employees' resource investment strategies. In doing so, managers could enhance relational identification among employees to

ensure their resource accumulation, thereby facilitating their communion striving on the face of experiencing ID. Additionally, though shown marginal influence in our study, the effects of vicarious ID could still be resource threatening (Wellen & Neale, 2006). Under vicarious ID, the importance of relational identification – a job resource becomes two-fold, as a low level of relational identification highlights the need to enter aggressive defensive mode. For instance, managers should effectively enhance role relationships among employees by connecting prototypical employees within the same departments (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007, 2008). The resource accumulation strategy could be further ensured by providing employees with a certain form of resources that could compensate for their previous resource depletion. This act can discourage employees' involvement in SSB where they accumulate resources for them. Thus, managers can ensure increased relationship roles to build relations where individuals feel more identified with their coworkers, thereby facilitating less threat from vicarious experiences. Third, besides relational identification, the connection between vicarious ID and communion striving is also contingent upon the extent of one's susceptibility to emotional contagion. This implies that managers should be cognizant of the risks associated with employees' ability to detect resource signals, specifically their high emotional contagion. Regarding this, managers could ascertain certain steps to dampen high emotional contagion such as by providing psychological services (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019) to those who feel threatened from ID experiences. Additionally, another course of action involves training employees to enforce a threat-free workplace with an emphasis on the least prevalence of ID. This will enable employees in buffering the effects of experiencing ID.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations which can be considered as potential future research directions. First, our research design offers novel insights into ID literature, yet, yet our correlational design could not indicate the effects of a particular day's experiences and how they vary over time. Future studies may use other forms of research design e.g., diary studies to make an in-depth analysis of the effects of daily events of ID experiences. Second, although our study was able to demonstrate the indirect effects across two-wave data studies through relational identification and emotional contagion, other boundary conditions can be considered in the future. Other factors may influence the impact of employees' experiences (Hobfoll et al., 2018). A significant boundary condition that warrants future attention might be leader-member exchange, as high-quality LMX ensures more resource availability to employees (Loi, Ngo, Zhang, & Lau, 2011), thus may mitigate the negative effects of experiencing ID. Third, our study focus on the role of a 'strategically defensive mechanism' to deal with resource loss. While this emphasis may generalize the findings to the working population, we were unable to offer a more contextualized understanding of how experiencing ID functions within the specific sector or job. Future research may consider these aspects within a precise occupational or organizational context.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that experiencing ID i.e. vicarious ID or direct ID can inform distinct 'defensive strategies' among employees to deal with their stress. And the experiences of ID that arise from the prevalence of deviant behaviors are explained through an underlying mechanism that goes beyond affirming one's self-concept and varies with the type of experiencing ID. By shedding light on the consequences of experiencing ID and how and when

employees enter into the aggressive mode or defensive withdrawal, this study not only exhibits the simultaneous effect of types of experiencing ID – defensive strategies phenomenon but also provides the stage for future research on this aspect.

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EXPERIENCING INTERPERSONAL DEVIANCE

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Direct ID	1.6	.6	(.80)									
2. Vicarious ID	1.8	.8	.39**	(.87)								
3. Communion striving	3.5	.7	.12*	.03	(.86)							
4. Emotional contagion	3.5	.8	.03	.09	.02	(.86)						
5. Relational Identification	3.9	.7	-.01	-.09 ⁺	.25**	-.04	(.84)					
6. Self-Serving Behavior	2.1	.9	.11*	.10 ⁺	.21**	.11*	-.003	(.91)				
7. Sector	1.3	.4	-.15**	-.15**	-.01	.01	-.04	-.16**	1			
8. Hierarchy	1.5	.7	-.06	-.03	.21**	.16**	.12*	.08	-.48**	1		
9. Age	30	5.3	.06	.07	.07	-.06	.04	.15**	.17**	-.19**	1	
10. Industry	4.3	2.9	.00	.03	.07	.05	.05	-.01	.46**	.52**	-.00	1

Notes. N = 346, Values presented in parentheses on the diagonal are composite reliabilities.

⁺p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. Vicarious ID = vicarious interpersonal deviance, direct ID = Direct interpersonal deviance

Table 2. Hierarchical Linear Modeling: Self- Serving Behavior as a Dependent Variable

Variables	H1a		H1b	
	β	S.E	β	S.E
Intercept	1.31***	.36	1.32***	.41
^a Sector	-.23***	.06	-.52***	.12
Industry	-.03	0.06	-.01	
Hierarchy	.24***	.06	.36***	.08
Age	.15***	.05	.03***	.01
Vicarious ID			.07	.06
Direct ID	.08 ⁺	.05		

Note: N=346; ***p < .001, ⁺p ≤ .10. ^a Public = 0, Private=1

EXPERIENCING INTERPERSONAL DEVIANCE

Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Modeling: Communion Striving as a Dependent Variable

Variables	H2a/M1		H3a/M2		H4/M3		H2b/M4		H3b/M5	
	β	S.E	β	S.E	β	S.E	β	S.E	β	S.E
Intercept	3.51***	.41	3.75***	.45	3.54***	.46	3.58***	.46	3.83***	.45
^a Sector	-.13*	.06	-.10 ⁺	.06	.14*	.06	-.11*	.06	.08	.06
Industry	-.02	.06	-.02	.06	-.03	.06	-.03	.06	-.06	.06
Hierarchy	.29***	.06	.25***	.06	.31***	.06	.30***	.06	.23***	.06
Age	.10 ⁺	.05	.08	.05	.09	.05	.09 ⁺	.05	.08 ⁺	.05
Vicarious ID	.01	.05	.02	.05	.02	.05				
Direct ID							.12*	.05	.11*	.05
Emotional contagion (EC)					-.02	.05				
Vicarious ID*EC					.12*	.05				
Relational Identification (RID)			.23***	.05					.22***	.05
Vicarious ID*RID			-.12*	.05						
Direct ID *RID									-.11*	.05

Note: N=346; ⁺p = .05. *p < .05. ***p < .001. Vicarious ID = vicarious interpersonal deviance, direct ID = Direct interpersonal deviance, ^a Public = 0, Private=1

EXPERIENCING INTERPERSONAL DEVIANCE

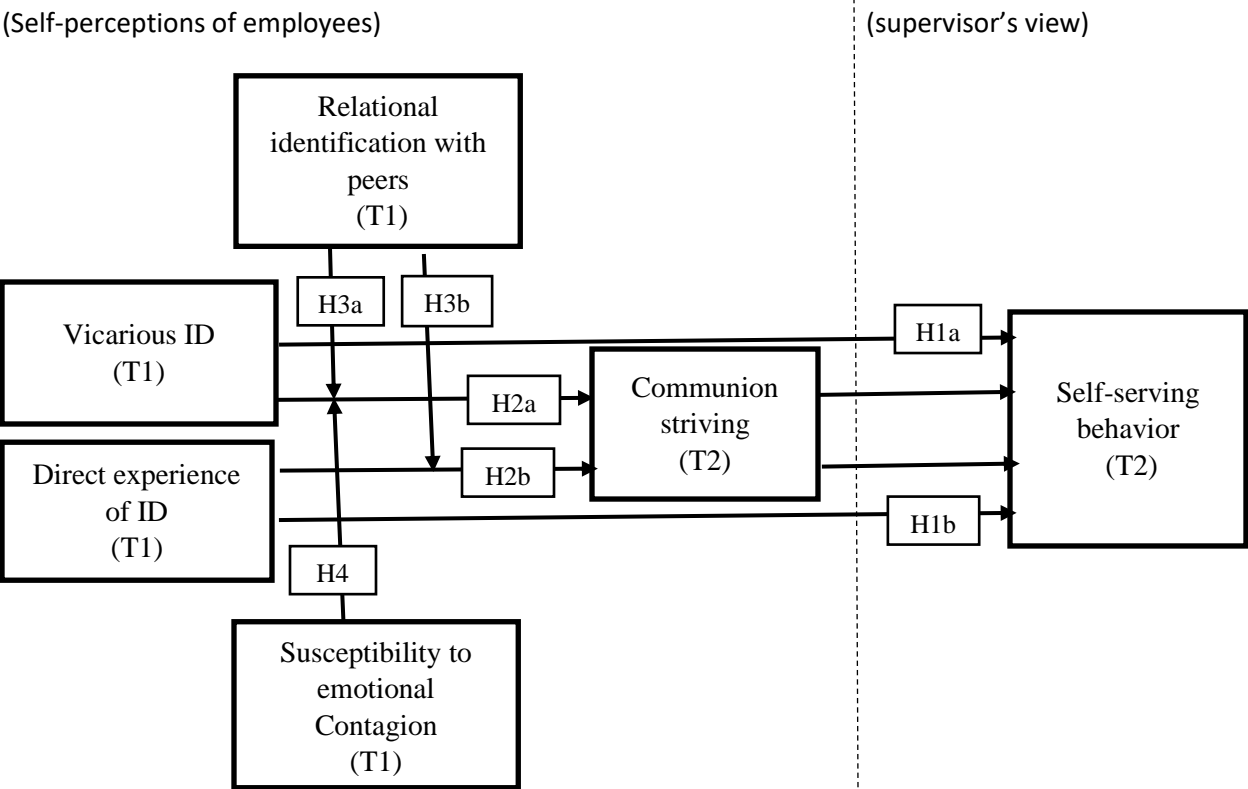


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Experiencing Interpersonal Deviance

EXPERIENCING INTERPERSONAL DEVIANCE

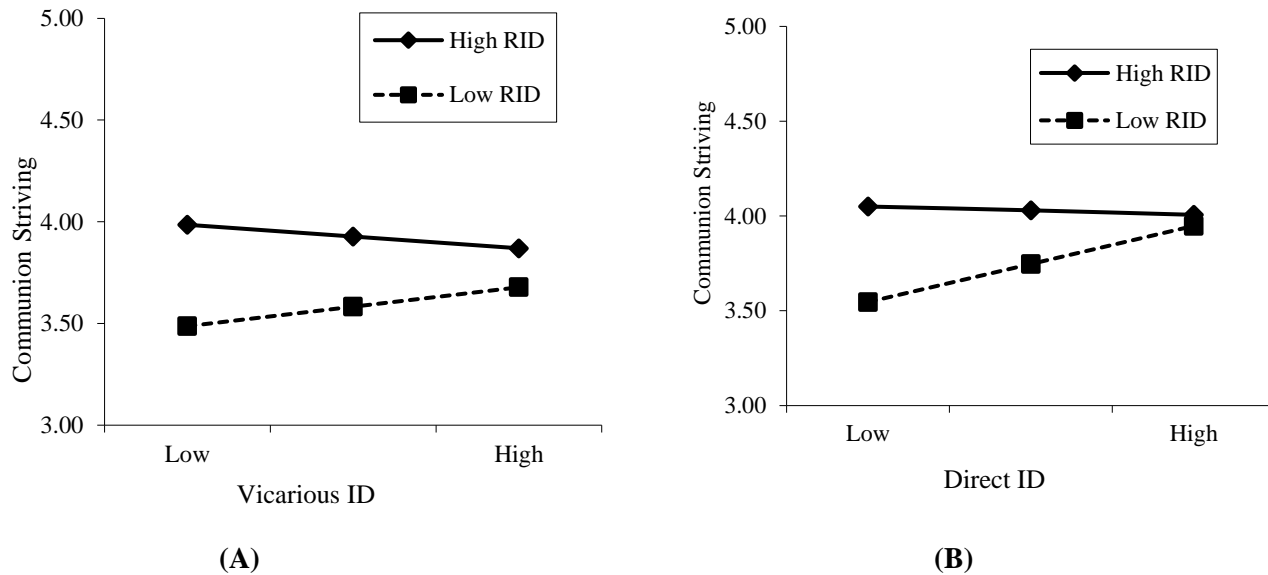


Figure 2. Moderation of relational identification (RID) for the Relationship Between of Experiencing ID and Communion Striving

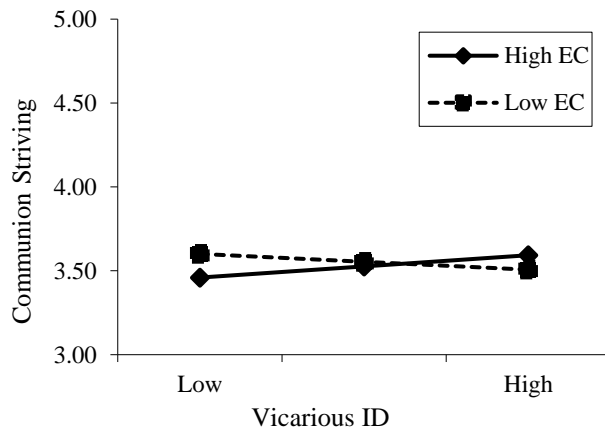


Figure 3. Moderation of Emotional Contagion (EC) for the Relationship Between Vicarious ID and Communion Striving