The Role of Stigma-Consciousness in the Demonstration of Allyship Behaviors amongst White Employees

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Employees

Over the years, there has been heighted awareness of DEI initiatives within academic

research, including the topic of allyship and means to foster a more inclusive workplace

environment (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018). Research on allyship often addresses the methods through

which one can be an ally, focusing more on the action component. Additionally, the emphasis on

ways to foster inclusion is primarily targeted towards the organization, universities, and

employees themselves. Missing is a cognitive approach as to *why* employees may or may not

showcase allyship behaviors. This study examines this through the lens of stigma consciousness,

with the focus being on White employees. Stigma consciousness addresses how targets believe

their stereotyped status permeates their interactions with individuals of an outgroup (Pinel,

1999). This construct can be used as a basis for understanding how White employees high on

stigma consciousness may believe that others in the workplace view them in their stereotyped

identity. For Whites, this may implicate characteristics such as entitlement, privileged status, and

ignorance, among other stereotypes. Recent research on White identification supports the notion

that when White individuals believe that others view them as an ally, they become more willing

to engage in allyship behaviors; however, for those who believe that minorities view them as

"inactive", White individuals are less willing to engage in allyship behaviors (Adra et al., 2020).

For White employees high on stigma consciousness, this can create a "white double bind". Good

intentions are present, but due to their identity being tied to acts of discrimination and racism, it

could lead to such intentions ceasing to turn into acts of allyship due to fear of saying or doing

the "wrong thing" (Sullivan, 2007). This results in the utilization of silence, thus passing up

opportunities to invalidate the stereotypes attributed to their group (Pinel, 1999). Due to this, it

can be hypothesized that White employees with high stigma consciousness are less inclined to showcase major forms of allyship behaviors for fear of being judged. It is further hypothesized that those low in stigma consciousness won't perceive others view them as their stereotyped identity, thus the fear of being judged is not present. What is present, however, is elevated levels of collective guilt. Based on Knowles and colleagues' (2014) 3-D model of White identity management, White employees may engage in actions that dismantle systems of privilege due to collective guilt, leading them to be inclined to show more prominent forms of allyship behaviors as a means of decreasing their privilege. To test these interactions, data collection will occur in three phases: a pilot study, a qualitative study, and a quantitative study. To begin, authors will conduct a pilot study collecting stereotypes about White employees from 100 participants on Prolific. Next, the authors will conduct semi-structured interviews with 25 White, working professionals. The questions during the interviews will be focused on the hypothesized relationships, along with other variables that are not grounded in the proposed hypotheses. The data will then be analyzed before proceeding with the quantitative study, leaving room to make changes to the hypothesized model if needed. Lastly, to test the hypothesized relationships, the authors plan to implement a quantitative study design using survey data. The study will include a primary sample of 400-500 White, full-time working adults recruited through Prolific. This study adopts a two waves three-week time-lag design between each administration of the surveys. Time 1 data collection will focus on the independent variables and mediators, whereas Time 2 data collection will focus on the moderators and dependent variables. The study offers a unique perspective on the cognitive ways in which members of the dominant racial group chooses to engage, or not engage, in allyship behaviors. Along with the various ways that such behaviors are showcased, there is reason to believe that simply because an individual does not engage in

allyship behaviors, does not mean that the intent or desire to do so is never present. This study uses a conscious-level approach to examine that in both how one perceives they are viewed, the feelings that such entails, along with the levels of identification one may have with their racial group. The belief is that with such understanding will come an increase in self-awareness concerning the mechanisms that act as antecedents to the engagement of allyship behaviors. Such understanding can aid in modifications amongst individuals to foster a more inclusive workplace environment.

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