Effect of the Self-Regulatory Mode on the Perceived Job Performance: The Mediating Role of the Victimization

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In the last decades, social scientists have unraveled two independent self-regulatory orientations that are part and parcel of a goal pursuit. The first orientation is assessment which pertains to comparing and evaluating the value of an individual’s current state to future and states. The second one is locomotion which pertains to initiating movement away from a current state to reach a new one. There has been an increased interest in whether the individual’s behaviors at work are related to their victimization. In this study we investigated that regulatory modes (locomotion and assessment) influence the type of victimization people experience which in turn influences their subsequent job performance where only few scholars have investigated those relationships separately.

Depending the data, collected from 1017 employees from various sectors, our finding demonstrated that locomotion and assessment have a significant effect on victimization that they experience and their subsequent job performance. And also victimization mediated the relationship between assessment and subsequent job performance.

Field of Research: Management

1. Introduction

Regulatory mode theory refers to two fundamental self-regulatory functions referred to respectively as assessment and locomotion. Assessment constitutes the comparative aspect of self-regulation concerned with critically evaluating entities or states, such as goals or means, in relation to alternatives in order to judge relative quality. Locomotion, in contrast, constitutes the aspect of self-regulation concerned with movement from state to state and with committing the psychological resources that will initiate and maintain goal-related movement in a straightforward and direct manner, without undue distractions or delays. Assessment is positively correlated with depression and anxiety and negatively correlated with self-confidence and optimism, while locomotion is positively correlated with self-confidence and optimism but negatively correlated with anxiety and depression.

Research on employee victimization (incivility, workplace aggression, harassment, bullying) attracts the attention of many researchers for many years. Victimization means punishing or threatening to punish someone. Victimization in the workplace can include, bullying and intimidation by co-workers, being denied a promotion or being moved to a position with lower responsibility, dismissal from employment, being refused further contract work.

The present research aimed to verify how job performance is affected by individual differences in the tendency toward locomotion and assessment, two self-regulatory concerns outlined by the regulatory mode theory (Higgins et al., 2003a; Kruglanski et al., 2000). In what follows, we introduced the regulatory mode theory and discussed its implications for job performance. Also we investigated how employee victimization effect the subsequent performance of the employee. A second purpose of the

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present research was to investigate the mediating role of victimization in the relation between self-regulatory modes and job performance.

We first briefly review regulatory mode theory and employee victimization. Drawing on these notions, we then formulate our specific hypotheses and describe how we empirically scrutinized them.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Regulatory Mode Theory

In accordance with regulatory mode theory (Higgins et al., 2003a), two major self-regulatory components guide human behavior which are assessment and locomotion. Locomotion, refers to the aspect of self-regulation involving moving away from a current state to another. It is best described by the precept “just do it,” which dictates “committing the psychological resources that will initiate and maintain goal-directed progress in a straightforward manner, without undue distractions or delays” (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Whereas assessment, refers to comparative aspect of self-regulation involving critical evaluation of alternative goals and the means for achieving them. Assessment is an orientation encapsulated in the motto “doing the right thing”. Assessment and locomotion together form part of any self-regulatory activity. Locomotion and assessment enable individuals to achieve their goals by allowing them to choose the appropriate options (assessment) and take action to attain their goals (locomotion). Some researches support this conceptualization of locomotion and assessment. For example, several studies have shown that assessment is positively related with fear invalidity, discomfort with ambiguity, neuroticism, and low self-esteem (Kruglanski et al., 2000), whereas it has been shown to negatively related with counterfactual thinking and regret (Pierro et al., 2008). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that locomotion positively related with psychological vitality, self-esteem, optimism, and negatively related with social anxiety and depression (Kruglanski et al., 2000).

In addition, an individuals’ orientation toward each mode can vary as a function of situational features (Avnet & Higgins, 2006; Orehek, et al., 2012) and can also represent relatively stable individual differences because of both temperament and socialization factors (Higgins et al, 2003a; Higgins et al., 2003b). From an individual difference perspective, the independence of the two regulatory modes would be reflected in the fact that not only are there individuals who are high in locomotion and low in assessment and individuals who are high in assessment and low in locomotion, but there are also individuals who are relatively high or relatively low in both dimensions.

Research has generally shown that locomotion and assessment are largely orthogonal regulatory modes (Higgins et al., 2003b; Kruglanski et al., 2000). The independence of the two modes allows for a possible predominance of one mode over the other. Generally, assessment should lead to greater consideration of possible routes to goal pursuit, guiding the self in specified directions. However, a person operating predominately in the assessment mode may engage in excessive musing, always looking but never leaping. On the other hand, locomotion should improve the performance of many tasks through its emphasis on doing something, increasing attainment. However, a person operating predominately in the locomotion mode may engage in many activities without any particular end in mind, essentially “running around like a chicken with its head cut off” or “leaping” without first “looking.”
In according to this conceptualization, optimal self-regulation should usually utilize both modes of the self-regulation in order to “go” (locomotion) “in the right direction” (assessment) rather than going just anywhere (insufficient assessment) or reflecting forever and going nowhere (insufficient locomotion). “Going in the right direction” requires that locomotion and assessment work together (Higgins, 2003a).

Research supports the complementarity hypothesis and demonstrates the critical roles of both locomotion and assessment for self-regulation and similar goal-relevant activities. First, Kruglanski et al. (2000) showed that individuals who are high on both regulatory modes tend to perform better in goal pursuit and achievement. One study found that a main effect of locomotion on college GPA was qualified by an interaction with assessment. The effect of locomotion was observed only among those high in assessment; this effect disappeared for those low in assessment. The same pattern held for individuals in rigorous and challenging Army Ranger training; locomotion scores predicted success rates only for those high in assessment. A similar pattern of results was found in Pierro et al. (2006). These findings demonstrate that locomotion and assessment can act as complementary self-regulatory orientations within individuals, thus enhancing the goal-relevant performance of those who are high on both regulatory modes. Stable individual differences in locomotion and assessment are especially important for job performance.

First aim of the present research was to investigate, the relation between the two self-regulatory modes and job performance. We hypothesized a positive relation between both self-regulatory modes and job performance.

_Hypothesis 1_: Locomotion is positively related to subsequent job performance.

_Hypothesis 2_: Assessment is positively related to subsequent job performance.

2.2. Employee Victimization

Research on employee victimization—experiencing workplace aggression, bullying and intimidation by co-workers, being denied a promotion or being moved to a position with lower responsibility, dismissal from employment, being refused further contract work — has grown substantially in the past decade. Victimization has been linked to a host of negative psychological and job-related outcomes for targets and organizations (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Henschcovis & Barling, 2010). The question of whether excellent or poor performers are victimized has intrigued scholars for some time. Some have argued that targets of aggression are “genuinely bright, creative, self-assured people . . . since these people are a threat, bullies work hard to undermine them” (Namie & Namie, 2000, p. 41). Consistent with this view, scholars have found that victims tend to be nominated by peers as stars in their work groups (Coyne, Craig, & Chong, 2004) and have high cognitive ability (Kim & Glomb, 2010). On the other hand, others have argued that those who underperform in work groups are likely to be victimized as well (Felps et al., 2006). In line with this argument, evidence suggests that employees who withhold discretionary contributions report higher victimization (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004) and that peers respond to underperformers with strategies including direct confrontation and hostility (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Lubit, 2004). With these mixed arguments and evidence in the literature, it is not clear whether employees’ job performance is positively or negatively related to victimization (Jensen et al., 2014).
Scholars also highlighted the different forms of employee victimization which are overt and covert victimization. **Overt victimization**, which includes behaviors that harm a target where the perpetrator does not attempt to hide his or her actions, versus **covert victimization**, which includes behaviors that harm a target where the perpetrator's actions are disguised and subtle in nature (Björkqvist et al. 1994, Baron and Neuman 1998, and Kaukiainen et al., 2001). Overt acts include making threats and swearing or yelling, whereas covert acts include withholding job-related information or giving someone the “silent treatment” (Baron et al., 1999; Kaukiainen et al., 2001).

As a result of any forms of victimization from coworkers, we believe that employees will experience lower performance in their jobs. There is a reason to believe that being victimized will have negative effect on subsequent job performance. Porath and Erez (2007) argued that experiencing even a single uncivil act, even rudeness, can have a negative effect on performance because it disrupts cognitive processes that would otherwise be focused on task requirements. Others have made similar arguments about the ways in which victimization may cause targets to become distracted and less focused on their work because they are mentally reliving the incident or dedicating valuable mental energy to assessing the situation rather than doing their work (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Raver et al, 2012).

In current research we argue that employee victimization is an important factor which can affect the subsequent performance of the employee. Different forms of victimization (e.g., incivility, bullying) have virtually identical relationships with target outcomes (Hershcovis, 2011), we expect that covert and overt victimization will exert parallel effects on subsequent job performance. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3**: Overt victimization from coworkers is negatively related to subsequent job performance.

**Hypothesis 4**: Covert victimization from coworkers is negatively related to subsequent job performance

This research investigated the relationship between regulatory mode orientations (locomotion and assessment), different forms of victimization (overt and covert) and the performance of the employee. As mentioned above “Locomotion” refers to the aspect of self-regulation involving the movement from state to state, whereas “assessment” is the comparative aspect of self-regulation that refers to the critical evaluation of alternative goals and the means for achieving them.

According to regulatory mode orientations, the likelihood of experiencing overt or covert victimization differs. Poor performers tend to have low prestige because of their performance and as a consequence they may be looked down upon by coworkers and managers. Felps et al. (2006) reviewed evidence suggesting that when group members free-ride, coworkers attempt to change their behavior and these interventions include direct, aggressive confrontations. In accordance with these, we expect that individual regulatory mode orientations will exert effects on different forms of victimization.

**Hypothesis 5**: Locomotion is negatively related to overt victimization from coworkers.

**Hypothesis 6**: Locomotion is positively related to covert victimization from coworkers.
**Hypothesis 7:** Assessment is positively related to overt victimization from coworkers.

**Hypothesis 8:** Assessment is positively related to covert victimization from coworkers.

Since as a consequence of victimization from coworkers, we argue that individuals will experience diminished performance in their jobs, we expect that overt and covert victimization will have a mediating effect on the relationship between locomotion/assessment and subsequent job performance. In accordance with these, we are proposing that victimization mediates the relationship between self-regulatory modes and subsequent job performance.

Hypothesis 9: Overt victimization mediates the relationship between locomotion and subsequent job performance.

Hypothesis 10: Overt victimization mediates the relationship between assessment and subsequent job performance.

Hypothesis 11: Covert victimization mediates the relationship between locomotion and subsequent job performance.

Hypothesis 12: Covert victimization mediates the relationship between assessment and subsequent job performance.

### 3. Research Method

#### 3.1. Proposed Model

The hypothesized model is shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Research Model](image-url)
3.2. Sampling Design

To test our hypothesis, we collected data from 1017 employees who are working in various sectors in Turkey by using convenience sampling method. Following Brislim's (1980) back to back translation procedure, the questionnaire was translated from English to Turkish and back translated to Turkish by two experts in English. The two translators worked independently, and only a few minor discrepancies in wording emerged and were resolved by translators as they talked through the differences. After removing the semi-filled questionnaires were first aggregated and then analyzed using SPSS and tested through LISREL structural equation modelling.

3.3. Measures

The constructs in our study are developed by using measurement scales adopted from prior studies. Unless otherwise stated, responses to all of item in our survey were recodes on 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scales were coded such that high values represented high level of the constructs. The instruments used to collect data are Likert scale questionnaire that tested before to determine the validity and reliability of instrument.

Kruglanski et al. (2000) developed and validated two scales (12 items each) that measure the orientation toward locomotion and toward assessment.

Aggressive Experiences Scale (AES) developed by Glomb (2002) was employed to measure overt victimization (6 items) and covert victimization (6 items). Employees reported how often they had been the target of a series of behaviors enacted by their group members during the previous 30 days.

Individual performance scale developed by Jensen et al. (2014) was employed to measure the performance of the employee. The measure uses a 6 item scale, with each item representing a dimension of individual performance: effort, quality, quantity, creativity, extra work-related behaviors and overall performance.

3.4. Findings

The demographic characteristics of participants were subjected to frequency analysis. Participants’ average job tenure is 8.49 and average age is 32.17. 57.3 % of them are male and 42.7 % is female. 50% of the participants has a university degree, 15.8% has a master’s degree and 1.1% has doctorate degree. The rest of the participants has lower degrees of education.

To control for common method bias in line with the original-factor test was conducted, although the explanatory power of it is controversial and no single factor emerged in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Podsakoff et al, 2003). In line with Knight (1997), in international studies it is important “to evaluate the dimensionality of the scale” and to control for factor structure and loadings. EFAs using Varimax rotation were conducted for the dependent variables (performance of the employees); the independent variables (entrepreneurs’ passion and transformational leadership style) were following generally accepted procedures. For exploratory research, a Cronbach’s’ α greater than 0.70 is generally considerate reliable (Nunnally, 1978).
As can be seen from the Cronbach Alpha values reported in Table 1, variables of our study are found to be reliable.

**Table 1. Means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients, and correlations among study variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Dev.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Locomotion</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>(.886)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assessment</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>(.842)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Overt Victimization</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>-.262&quot;</td>
<td>.069*</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Covert Victimization</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.092**</td>
<td>.094**</td>
<td>.404**</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived Job Performance</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.271**</td>
<td>.087**</td>
<td>-.308&quot;</td>
<td>-.174&quot;</td>
<td>.899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We display means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measures in Table 1. Due to the correlation values between variables all hypothesis H₁ ... H₈ are accepted.

Path analyses using LISREL were conducted to examine the mediating role of victimization in the relationship between regulatory modes and the performance of the employee. Path analysis belongs to the structural equation modeling family tree and reflects the structural (or path) model of the hybrid model (i.e., path and measurement models). It represents an advanced technique to simultaneously test for mediator and outcome effects (Kline, 1998).

**Figure 2. Results from path analysis.**

![Path analysis diagram](image)

All significant paths were shown in Figure 2. Standardized beta values are reported.

This model fit the data well: χ²(455) = 2,090.31 (p = .00), comparative fit index (CFI) = .92, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05, normed fit index (NFI) = .90.

From the Lisrel path analysis model it can be seen that covert victimization mediates the relationship between locomotion / assessment and perceived job performance of the employee (H₁₁ and H₁₂ accepted). Beside these overt victimization mediates the relationship between locomotion and perceived job performance (H₉ accepted) but
not the relationship between assessment and perceived job performance (H$_{10}$ rejected).

4. Conclusion

The primary goal of this research was to investigate that regulatory modes (locomotion and assessment) influence the type of victimization people experience which in turn influences their subsequent job performance. This is a question of both academic importance and practical significance as scholars and practitioners have turned their attention to understanding the behaviors of individuals who are likely to be targets of aggression in the workplace. Consistent with the literature, we observed that individuals who has tendency toward assessment experience both overt and covert victimization whereas individuals who has tendency toward locomotion experience covert victimization rather than overt victimization. Previous researches showed that low performers are more likely to experience overt victimization such as swearing, yelling, hostile body language, and threats, whereas excellent performers are more likely to experience covert victimization such as withholding information or resources, sabotage, or being avoided. As past research on the consequences of victimization has tended to treat aggression as an overall category, it is clear that being an over performer relates to very different kinds of mistreatment than being an underperformer, and distinguishing overt from covert acts allows for more accurate predictions.

As a result of any forms of victimization from coworkers, we believe that employees will experience lower performance in their jobs. Porath and Erez (2007) argued that experiencing even a single uncivil act, even rudeness, can have a negative effect on performance because it disrupts cognitive processes that would otherwise be focused on task requirements. Others have made similar arguments about the ways in which victimization may cause targets to become distracted and less focused on their work because they are mentally reliving the incident or dedicating valuable mental energy to assessing the, situation rather than doing their work (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Raver, Jensen, Lee, & O’Reilly, 2012). In line with the literature, our findings indicated that employee victimization is an important factor which has a negative effect on the subsequent performance of the employee.

Researches has shown that individual differences in locomotion and assessment are especially important for job performance (Pierro et al., 2006). Individuals who has tendency toward locomotion has more positive effect on the performance of the employee. Assessment orientation refers, in general, to the tendency to make comparisons, evaluations about quantity and quality, to critically estimate the importance of things. Consistent with previous studies, the present research did not find a strong effect of assessment on job performance. This study has clearly demonstrated that the mediating effect of victimization between regulatory modes and subsequent job performance.

5. Limitation and Future Research

Findings of the individual performance scale have the limitation of being based on self-report measures of the employees. The study is also limited by its sampling technique, convenience sampling. Further research is suggested to collect data over a wider range of the employees and/or investigate the differences in various sectors. It is also possible that covert victimization has negative consequences for other areas of employee well-being, including satisfaction or job stress (Kaukiainen et al., 2001).
or group members’ willingness to cooperate and help perpetrators. We were also unable to directly assess the perpetrator’s rationale for why victims were targeted. Moreover, research should look at both perpetrator and victim characteristics, cognitions, and affect, consistent with the model proposed by Aquino and Lamertz (2004) to investigate the relational aspects of aggressive behavior. Related to this point, we also focused on aggression perpetrated only by coworkers. It is possible that supervisors and individuals outside the work group may engage in hostile behaviors toward employees as well. For example, recent research on the relationship between subordinate performance and abusive supervision suggests that low performers may also be drawing the ire of their bosses (Tepper et al., 2011). The relationship between regulatory modes and achievement goals should be researched. The achievement motivation literature typically distinguishes between mastery and performance goals, whereby the former involves the development of proficiency and the latter involves proving one’s competence (Dweck, 1991). One question that could be investigated is whether the relationship between regulatory modes and achievement goals are mediated by victimization in the same way as the model presented in this manuscript.

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