

Summary

Distribution Strategies in Minimal Group Paradigm, Social Norms, and Self-Esteem

Emir Üzümçeker¹

Dokuz Eylül University

Serap Akfırat

Dokuz Eylül University

The aim of this study has threefolds. The first one is the replicate the original minimal group experiments by Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament (1971) in Turkey. The second one is to examine whether ingroup favoring strategies in minimal group situations predict an increase in individuals' collective self-esteem. The last one is to investigate whether distribution strategies in minimal group paradigm vary in the way that the different social norms are primed.

The minimal group paradigm was designed by Tajfel and his students to identify the minimal conditions for social categorization which give rise to ingroup favoritism (Tajfel et al., 1971). In this paradigm, participants were informed that they were assigned to two different groups either randomly or using trivial criteria such as their artistic preferences. Then, they were asked to distribute points to anonymous members of their group and the other group. Participants were told that the distributed points will be converted to real-life money. The first experiment by Tajfel et al. (1971) established four different distribution strategies that can be used by participants: fairness, maximum joint profit, maximum ingroup profit, and maximum differentiation. The fairness strategy (F) was defined by the tendency to distribute equal points to the members of the ingroup and the outgroup, while the maximum joint profit strategy (MJP) is the strategy that aims to distribute the maximum total amount of points, regardless of the group. The maximum ingroup profit strategy (MIP) stands for aiming to award the maximum amount to ingroup members, regardless of what outgroup members gain. Finally, the maximum differentiation strategy (MD) was the strategy that aims to maximize the difference between the ingroup and the outgroup, even if it means decreasing the total gain of the ingroup. The results showed that both MD and MIP strategies were used by participants even when the groups are composed using trivial or random criteria. Thus, mere categorization of an individual into a group seemed to be enough to result in ingroup favoritism.

Different causal explanations have been suggested to explain ingroup favoritism in minimal group experiments. While the motivation for higher self-esteem was employed by the Social Identity Theory (Turner, 1975), social norms (Hertel & Kerr, 2001) were proposed as an alternative explanation to ingroup favoritism.

According to the Social Identity Theory, people gain information about their self from the groups they belong to, and for that reason, they compare the status of their group with other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Higher status groups provide a positive social identity, which increases self-esteem. The experiment by Oakes and Turner (1980) provided evidence that ingroup favoritism in the minimal group situation indeed increases individuals' self-esteem. The review by Rubin and Hewstone (1998), however, indicated that the self-esteem hypothesis has been partially supported. On the one hand, half of the research found that discrimination or ingroup favoritism increased self-esteem, on the other hand, low self-esteem is not found to be a factor that increased ingroup favoritism. Therefore, inconsistent results cast doubt on the self-esteem explanation of minimal group favoritism in a way which self-esteem seems to be albeit only for the collective and situation-specific measures. Thus, in this experimental study, we focused on the relationship between distribution strategies of the minimal group paradigm and collective self-esteem is examined, with the expectation that ingroup favoring strategies would predict an increase in collective self-esteem.

An alternative explanation of minimal group behavior rests on the influence of social norms. Hertel and Kerr (2001) tested the hypothesis that minimal group behavior is affected by the perceived norms of group behavior. They primed norms of intergroup equality and ingroup loyalty using word memorizing tasks. Their results indicated that ingroup favoritism is higher in the loyalty condition for ingroup than in the equality condition between groups, even if even participants tend to

ingroup favoritism in the equality condition. Thus, we expect that the perceived social norms of an individual can be a source of ingroup favoritism in minimal group conditions. Therefore, in the current experiment, participants were randomly assigned into two conditions the social norms of equality and competition to explain that individuals tend to be fair when they perceive equality as social norms, yet they tend to involve ingroup favoritism when they perceive social norm as a competition between groups.

Finally, the norm of reciprocity can be another explanation for ingroup favoritism in the minimum group paradigm. As a social norm, reciprocity dictates that one should respond to others' good or harmful deeds in the corresponding manner (Gouldner, 1960). Based on this norm, it can be argued that participants' expectations of how other ingroup and outgroup members would distribute the resource will differ in their distributions, i.e. reciprocating their rewarding or discriminatory behavior. It is hypothesized that those who expect fair distribution from outgroup members would be more likely to employ the fairness strategy, while those who expect ingroup favoritism will be more likely to employ the ingroup favoring strategy. In the same vein, it can be expected that those who expect ingroup favoritism from other ingroup members will be more likely to employ the ingroup favoring strategy.

Method

Participants

The sample of the study consists of 71 students (46 women, 25 men) from Dokuz Eylül University, aged between 18 and 25 ($M = 20.22$, $SD = 1.45$). Participants received a bonus of 5 course points for participation.

Procedure

Participants filled the Demographic Form, the Social Dominance Orientation Scale, and the Schwartz Value Survey nine days before the experimental manipulation. Then, the participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions such as "equality" ($n = 25$), "competition" ($n = 24$), and "control" ($n = 22$). To prime equality and competition norms, participants were asked to take a scrambled sentences test, which included norm-related words, such as "fair" for equality and "struggle" for competition. The scrambled sentences test for the control condition consisted of irrelevant sentences. After the manipulation, participants were told that they were anonymously assigned to one of the groups labeled "Reiko" or "Tatsuya" (in fact all participants were appointed as the 13th member of the "Reiko" group) and took the Minimal Group Matrices. They were told

that the points they distributed would be converted to the bonus credit for their courses. After the experimental session was over, the Collective Self-Esteem Scale and Expectations Toward Other Ingroup/Outgroup Members Scale were administered.

Measures

Minimal Group Strategies. The four matrices that Tajfel et al (1971, Experiment 2) introduced were used with four different group orders (I-O, O-I, I-I, O-O), resulting in 16 matrices. As it was in the original measure, we calculated MIP and MIP & MD points by using "pull scores." The middle point of the matrices represents F, while the left-pole of the matrices represents MJP.

Collective Self-Esteem Scale. The scale was developed by Luthanen and Crocker (1992) and translated into the Turkish language by Aslıtürk (2001). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .82 for this study.

Expectations Toward Other Ingroup/Outgroup Members. Participants' expectations about ingroup and outgroup members' preferred strategies are measured by two categorical questions (How do you think a member of the Reiko/Tatsuya group would do the distribution you just did?) with four categorical answers (fairly, by favoring the ingroup, by favoring the outgroup, by maximizing the total payment).

Results

The Use of Ingroup Favoring Strategies

To test whether the ingroup favoring strategies were significantly employed by participants, we conducted a one-sample t-test and compared the mean score of the MD and MIP & MD strategies to zero, as in Tajfel et al. (1971). The results indicated that the mean scores for both the strategies were significantly different from zero ($M = 1.54$, $S = 3.13$, $t(70) = 4.32$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$ for MIP & MD, $M = 2.07$, $S = 4.04$, $t(70) = 4.16$, $p < .001$, $d = .49$ for MD). Thus, the original results of Tajfel et al. (1971) were replicated in the context of Turkey.

The Effect of Equality and Competition Norms on Minimal Group Strategies

One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the means of strategy scores of equality, competition, and control groups. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between groups for any of the minimal group strategies.

Minimal Group Strategies and Collective Self-Esteem

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to examine how distribution strategies predict collective self-esteem. Distribution strategies, namely F, MJP, MD,

and MIP were entered as independent variables. The minimal group strategies did not explain a significant variation in collective self-esteem and none of the strategies emerged as a significant predictor.

Minimal Group Strategies and Expectations about other Ingroup/Outgroup Members

By conducting a one-way ANOVA, we found that the fairness strategy ($F(3, 70) = 5.35, p = .009, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .16$) differs significantly between the expectation categories for outgroup members' strategy preferences. Post-hoc Tukey tests indicated that the fairness scores for those who expected that outgroup members would employ fair strategies were higher than for those who expected from them an ingroup favoring strategy (Mean Diff = 1.42, $SE = .41, p = .04, d = .75$), and higher than those who expected them to employ the MJP strategy (Mean Diff = 2.05, $SE = .61, p = .01, d = 1.24$). Expectation categories also differed significantly in terms of ingroup favoring strategy, MIP & MD ($F(3, 70) = 2.86, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .13$). Post hoc Tukey tests showed that MIP & MD scores of those who expected outgroup members to employ ingroup strategies were higher than those who expected outgroup members to employ the fairness strategy (Mean Diff = 2.56, $SE = .81, p = .01, d = -.86$).

Similar results were obtained regarding the expectations from other ingroup members. Fairness scores F ($F(3, 70) = 5.37, p = .007, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .17$), maximum joint profit scores MJP ($F(3, 70) = 3.44, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .13$) and ingroup favoring scores MIP & MD ($F(3, 70) = 2.86, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11$) significantly differed between expectation categories. Post-hoc Tukey tests indicated that fairness scores of those who expected the other ingroup members to employ the fairness strategy were higher than those who expected them to employ the ingroup favoring strategy (Mean Diff = 1.44, $SE = .41, p = .02, d = .80$). Maximum joint profit strategy scores of those who expected the other ingroup members to employ the MJP strategy were higher than those who expected them to employ the fairness strategy (Mean Diff = 1.52, $SE = .52, p = .02, d = -1.35$), and higher than those who expected them to employ the ingroup favoring strategy (Mean Diff = 1.41, $SE = .49, p = .03, d = -1.21$). And lastly, ingroup favoring strategy scores of those who expected other ingroup members to employ the ingroup favoring strategy were higher than those who expected other ingroup members to employ the fairness strategies (Mean Diff = 2.12, $SE = .80, p = .04, d = -.70$).

Discussion

The current research aims to replicate the minimal group experiments in the context of Turkey, to examine

whether ingroup favoring strategies in minimal group situations predict higher collective self-esteem, and to investigate whether distribution strategies in minimal group paradigm differ by the social norms.

Results indicated that ingroup favoring strategies did not explain significant variance in collective self-esteem, which fails to provide support for the self-esteem hypothesis of social identity theory. This might be due to the small size of the sample. On the other hand, the manipulation of equality and competition norms failed to yield any significant differences, which might imply that social norms are irrelevant regarding intergroup behavior in minimal group conditions. Alternatively, failure in obtaining norm-induced differences might be seen as a failure of experimental manipulation. Using more explicit priming techniques might offer less confounded results in future studies.

The hypotheses based on the norm of reciprocity, however, are supported. As predicted, participants who expected the outgroup members to employ fair strategies tended to distribute the resources fairly, while those who expected the outgroup members to show ingroup favoritism seemed to behave likewise. It should be noted, however, that the direction of causality cannot be inferred in the present study, as these expectations are not manipulated. Future studies should examine this relationship with an experimental design.

To sum up, the original results were successfully replicated, while the self-esteem hypothesis was not supported. Although the manipulation of equality and competition norms failed to provide any significant effect, the results suggest that the norm of reciprocity may be relevant. While the study had some sample and methodological limitations, it is valuable as being the first replication of the minimal group paradigm experiment in Turkey.