

**FACTORS INFLUENCING SUPERVISORS'
DISCIPLINE SEVERITY WHEN FACING RULE
VIOLATIONS**

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Abstract

The present research examined the effects of three situational factors: causality ambiguity, severity of personal injury, and injury target on supervisors' discipline severity following a rule violation. Participants were 207 supervisors who either currently make or have made disciplinary decisions as part of their job. The participants read three of 24 scenarios about rule violations and made disciplinary decisions based on information contained in the scenarios. Results revealed statistically significant main effects for all three situational factors and a statistically significant injury severity X injury target effect on the discipline severity. When the injury targets are coworkers, more severe injuries lead to harsher discipline. When the injury targets are the violators, more severe injuries lead to less harsh discipline. The results support the notion that supervisors formulate discipline as a function of the context of rule violation rather than the violating behavior itself.

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Introduction

Discipline is an action taken against individuals who fail to conform to the rules of an organization to which the violator belongs (Rollinson, Hook, Foot, & Handley, 1996). Although discipline or punishment has unpleasant connotations, the use of discipline or threat of discipline is a relatively common phenomenon in organizations (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980), and in some cases, it is a necessary part of a supervisory responsibility. Indeed, virtually all managers find themselves delivering oral reprimands to violators and occasionally having to suspend or even fire a violator (Butterfield, Trevino, & Ball, 1996).

Disciplinary decision-making has important organizational implications (Arvey & Jones, 1985). For example, violators' willingness to change their behaviors and conform to organizational policy in the future depends to a large extent on their perceptions that they have been treated fairly (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974). Punishment decisions may not only impact the people receiving discipline but their coworkers as well. Punishment severity influences other employees' perception of justice, their attitudes towards the manager, and their turnover intentions (Niehoff, Paul, & Bunch, 1998). Coworkers may learn about organizational rules through observation of the discipline of others and discipline may impact work-group interaction patterns to which the disciplined employee belongs (Arvey & Jones, 1985). Given the impact of discipline on organizational functioning, it is important to study the factors that influence managerial discipline severity. Moreover, since some theories such as Attribution Theory and Organizational Justice Theory (OJT) have been applied and advanced in explaining managerial decision making process in previous research (e.g., Banks, 1976; Bazerman, Loewenstein, & White, 1992; Heerwagen, Beach, & Mitchell, 1985; Staley, Dastoor, Magner, & Stolp,

2003), examining factors influencing supervisors' disciplinary decisions provides an opportunity to assess the generalizability of those theories to a different context. In addition, examining factors influencing supervisors' discipline severity may provide insight and guidance regarding how to discipline violators fairly and consistently.

Researchers have identified some factors that influence discipline severity. For example, Boise (1965) examined the effects of the characteristics of violators on discipline severity. He found that violator's value to the department affects the supervisor's choice of disciplinary actions for rule violations. The greater the value of the violators to their department, the less severe disciplinary actions supervisors chose when disciplining the violator. Kipnis, Silverman, & Copeland (1973) investigated the effects of supervisor emotional states on the choice of disciplinary actions. They found that negative emotional states resulting from uncooperative or hostile subordinate behavior lead to more coercive disciplinary actions. Other factors that can influence supervisors' discipline severity include outcomes of the violation (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Fukami & Hopkins, 1993; Trahan & Steiner, 1994), performance history of the violator (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Fukami & Hopkins, 1993; Trahan & Steiner, 1994), and the talent, status, and compensation equity of the violator (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974). Supervisor intent also influences discipline severity. Supervisors who intend to motivate violators will choose less severe discipline actions than supervisors who use discipline to correct violators' wrong behaviors (Trahan & Steiner, 1994). While this body of research has contributed to understanding why supervisors punish the way they do, gaps in the literature remain. I examine three gaps in the present investigation.

One gap is how supervisors discipline violators where there are some questions as to whether the violator was fully responsible for the violation. Prior researchers have explicitly or implicitly assumed that the violator was fully responsible for the rule violation. However, in organizations there are times when violators are not totally responsible for the rule violation they commit. Unfortunately, there is little evidence on how supervisors administer punishment when full causality is less clear. Therefore, examining supervisors' disciplinary decision making when full blame may not be attributed to the violator may extend our understanding of why supervisors discipline the way they do. That is, examining the causality ambiguity of the rule violation may explain the differences among certain supervisory disciplinary decisions following similar rule violations.

Second, we need to examine additional situational factors affecting discipline choice such as severity of personal injury and injury target to extend our knowledge of disciplinary decision-making. Researchers have examined the effect of personal injury to coworkers on supervisors' discipline severity. Research shows that the severity of punishment selected will be greater for violators whose actions cause personal injury to coworkers than for violators whose actions do not physically harm coworkers (Fukami & Hopkins, 1993). However, people sometimes hurt themselves when they break company rules. Unfortunately, I could not find any research addressing how supervisors discipline violators who hurt themselves. Therefore, studying severity of personal injury and injury target as situational factors may extend our knowledge in this field.

Third, there is little research examining the interaction of situational factors on supervisory discipline decision-making. One notable exception is Fukami & Hopkins

(1993)'s study. They had examined the interactions among three situational factors (performance history of the violator, personal injury resulted from the violation, property damage resulted from the violation) and one demographic factor (gender of the violator) on supervisors' discipline severity. They also examined the interactions among the above three situational factors and supervisor/violator gender dyads (i.e., female violator – male supervisor, female violator – female supervisor, male violator – female supervisor, male violator – male supervisor) on supervisors' discipline severity. They only found one two-way interaction of violator gender and property damage on the discipline severity. That is, supervisors chose harsher discipline for male violators than they would for female violators when there is no property damage resulted from the violation. Supervisors chose similar discipline for male and female violators when the violation caused property damage. However, data did not support the existence of any other interactive effects among these factors on the discipline severity.

Based on their results, Fukami & Hopkins (1993) proposed that supervisors make disciplinary decisions in a simple, linear fashion. That is, supervisors may not consider two or more situational factors together when administering discipline. Thus, examining other potential interactive effects of situational factors on supervisors' discipline severity allows additional assessment of that statement.

In the present research, I will examine the effects of three situational factors on supervisor's discipline decisions. Specifically, I will examine causality ambiguity, severity of personal injury, injury target and the interaction of severity of personal injury and injury target.

Theoretical Development

Situational Factors

1. Causality Ambiguity

Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958) focuses on explaining interpersonal relations. A central tenet of the Attribution Theory is that responses to others' actions are largely a function of causality attributions of the actions (Kelley, 1972). When people feel an individual is the cause of the action (i.e. personal causality) they will hold that individual responsible for that action. Some other objective characteristics of the event pattern may cause the action (Heider, 1958). When people attribute the causality of an individual's action to environmental conditions (i.e., impersonal causality) and believe the causality of the action is located in the environment, they will not blame that individual for the action. Similarly, Kelley (1972) also stated that attribution of an individual's behavior affects subsequent behavior and attitudes toward that individual. That is, decision-makers believe a decision directly affecting an individual is not appropriate when they attribute the causality of the individual's behavior to the environment (Lord & Smith, 1983). When decision-makers attribute the causality of the behavior to an individual, they are more likely to believe a decision directly affecting that individual is appropriate than when environmental factors cause the individual's behavior (Bemmels, 1991).

Causality attributions toward a potentially responsible individual vary as a function of the relative contribution of environmental factors to the individual's behavior (Heider, 1958). People attribute less causality to an individual when a plausible external cause for the behavior exists than when no such plausible cause exists (Kelley, 1972). This suggests that on those occasions when people have doubts about the totality of culpability,

their causality attributions to the individual decrease compared to situations when people have no doubt that the individual is totally responsible for the behavior.

Researchers have used Attribution Theory to explain supervisory decisions. For example, Mitchell and Wood (1980) proposed that supervisors made attributions regarding the cause of subordinates' poor performance and their attributions in turn influenced their decisions following subordinates' poor performance. They conducted two experiments in which nursing supervisors were asked to respond to vignettes depicting situation of subordinates' poor performance. In their vignettes, they manipulated work history of the subordinates so that participants would have information about consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus of the poor performance of the nurse. Results indicated that the more supervisors made causal attribution of poor performance internal to the subordinate nurse, the more negative their decisions would be. Other research (Banks, 1976; Heerwagen, Beach, & Mitchell, 1985; Klaas & Wheeler, 1990; Pence, Pendleton, Dobbins and Sgro, 1982; Wood & Mitchell, 1981) support Attribution Theory principles when explaining supervisors' decisions in subordinate poor performance contexts.

Attribution Theory may also explain supervisors' disciplinary decisions following rule violations by subordinates. Perhaps supervisory causality attributions affect supervisors' reactions to subordinates' violation behavior. When a subordinate violates an organization rule or policy, supervisors try to determine the extent to which the violator is responsible for the behavior. The degree to which supervisors assign causality may influence their discipline decisions. For example, supervisors may discipline a violator less severely when they perceive alternative reasons for the violator's deviant

behavior than when they view the violator as completely at fault. They would administer less severe discipline because they see extenuating circumstances outside the violator's control that affected the violator's behavior and that it wouldn't be right to punish the violator more harshly as a result of things not under the violator's control.

In addition to the Attribution Theory, Mischel (1977)'s work on strong and weak situations may be a useful framework to explain supervisors' disciplinary decisions. A strong situation is one where situational factors are powerful to the degree that they lead everyone to construe the particular events the same way thereby inducing uniform expectancies regarding the most appropriate response pattern. In such situation, everyone expects that only one response is most appropriate. On the other hand, a weak situation is not uniformly encoded, does not generate uniform expectancies concerning the desired behavior, and does not offer sufficient incentives for its performance.

Causality ambiguity appears similar to strong and weak situations. Clear causality situations appear similar to strong situations because the clear situation is strong to the degree that it leads almost everyone to believe that the causality of the rule violation should be attributed to the violator. An ambiguous causality situation appears similar to weak situation because weak situations contain factors that lead to less conclusive perceptions of blame for the rule violations.

When supervisors face rule violations with clear causality, they may be more likely to believe harsh punishment is an appropriate decision because there is little doubt that extenuating circumstances did not cause the violators' rule breaking behavior. On the other hand, weak situations are ambiguous because supervisors may feel that extenuating circumstances affected the violator's decision to break a rule. Thus, supervisors have a

more difficult time categorizing weak situations than strong situations. I believe that difficulty in categorizing weak situations leads to more decision variability and less harsh discipline than strong situations.

H1: Causality ambiguity affects discipline severity. Supervisors will give harsher discipline to violators when supervisors believe the violators primarily cause the rule violations than when the causality for the rule violations is less clear.

2. Severity of Personal Injury

Organizational Justice Theory (OJT) applies social and interpersonal justice to understanding behavior in organizations (Adams, 1965). There are two types of justice in organizations: procedural justice and distributive justice (Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the process used to allocate outcomes.

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes or allocations that an individual receives (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Indeed, the desire to behave fairly and to follow appropriate distributive justice rules can influence the decisions one chooses (Leventhal, 1976).

Researchers have used OJT to understand organizational decision-makings such as reward allocation decisions (e.g., Bazerman, Loewenstein, & White, 1992), compensation decisions (e.g., Scarpellc & Jones, 1996), and budget decisions (e.g., Staley, Dastoor, Magner, & Stolp, 2003). Although some researchers suggest that supervisors would follow justice rules when making disciplinary decisions (e.g., Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), I could not find any empirical research piece applying OJT to explain supervisors' disciplinary decision making. One notable study has used OJT to explain arbitrators'

decisions in cases regarding fighting between employees (Adams, Davis, & Jennings, 1988). They proposed that arbitrators would believe levels of punishment imposed on a grievant should fit the violation so that distributive justice can be served; therefore, arbitrators would consider the specific contingencies of the violation when they made arbitrary decisions. They found that arbitrators consider factors such as the extent of injury resulting from the employee fighting when making arbitrary decisions. The more severe the injury, the more likely the arbitrator will agree with the severe discipline imposed on the grievant. Adams et al. (1988)'s research suggests that arbitrators consider the fairness and appropriateness of their decisions before making them.

Perhaps supervisors also consider justice when assessing the severity of discipline they are about to impose on rule violators. Supervisors may think about whether their disciplinary decisions are fair and appropriate; that is, whether the punishment fits the violation. It is possible that supervisors may consider the specific contingencies of the violation when they made the disciplinary decisions. Thus, the consequence of rule violations may factor into supervisors' justice judgment. When the consequences of a rule violation are severe, supervisors may believe that punishing the violators is fair and appropriate and that the severity of the discipline should be proportional to the severity of consequences incurred. Therefore, when a personal injury stems from a rule violation, supervisors may believe that the severity of discipline should be proportional to the severity of personal injury incurred. Perhaps supervisors believe that punishing the violators harshly is not fair and appropriate when personal injury resulting from the rule violation is minor. On the other hand, harsh punishment is appropriate and distributive justice is served when the consequence of the rule violation is a major personal injury

because the punishment is proportional to the consequence of the rule-breaking behavior. Thus, we would expect that supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions to violators when a rule violation causes severe injury than when the violation results in a minor injury.

H2: Injury severity affects discipline severity. Supervisors will give harsher discipline to violators when the violator's behaviour causes severe injury than when the behaviour causes minor injury.

3. Injury target

Injury targets are people that receive a personal injury from the rule violating behavior. The use of the word target does not imply intentionality. Injury target can be an innocent co-worker who gets injured. While previous research has used coworkers of violators as injury targets of the rule violation (e.g., Fukami & Hopkins, 1993), it is still unclear whether discipline will differ when the violator is the one who gets injured.

OJT (Leventhal, 1976) suggests that discipline severity differs as a function of injury target. When the injury target is a co-worker, the supervisor will perceive that the injured coworkers suffer some harm that was not their responsibility. Perhaps supervisors will be more likely to believe it is fair to punish the violator harshly for the behavior because it resulted in a negative outcome for an innocent co-worker (i.e., an injury). Here the harsher punishment is a way to compensate for the injustice done to an innocent co-worker. On the other hand, a different decision may occur when the injury targets are the violators themselves. Perhaps supervisors perceive that distributive justice has occurred when violators injure themselves because the violators got hurt from their own incorrect behaviors. Supervisors may believe that the violators have, in part, been

punished. Thus, any discipline the supervisor administers is likely to be less severe than instances where violators injure their coworkers because additional harsh punishment is over and above what supervisors may perceive as fair and appropriate.

H3: Supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions when the injury targets are coworkers than they will when the injury targets are the violator themselves.

4. Personal Injury Severity and Injury target Interaction

Researchers have used OJT to explain interaction of situational factors on people's perception of the fairness of reward allocation. For example, Leung & Bond (1984)'s study has applied OJT to examine the interactive effects of allocators' performance and allocation style on people's perception of the fairness of reward allocation. In their study, participants were asked to read scenarios that described two coworkers who were working on an additive task together and who received a monetary group reward for the task. The allocator of the reward was one of the two coworkers, whose completed work was either two times more than the other co-worker's or half of the other co-worker's and who either divided the reward according to the equity rule or equality rule. Their data revealed that people will perceive the reward allocation of high performance allocators as fairer than that of low performance allocators when the equality rule governs allocation style. On the other hand, people will perceive the reward allocation of low performance allocators as fairer than that of high performance allocators when the equity rule governs allocation style.

Given that OJT appears to suggest interactive effects in the reward context, it is reasonable to assume that the theory also suggests that there would be interactive effects

of situational factors in the discipline context. One example may be the interactive effect of personal injury severity and injury target on discipline severity. Perhaps supervisors discipline the rule violator harsher for rule violating behavior that severely injures an innocent co-worker than when the behaviour causes minor injury to co-worker as discipline severity should be proportional to the injury incurred to maintain justice. More severe disciplinary decisions should follow violations that result in severe co-worker injuries than minor co-worker injuries. To do otherwise increases perceptions of distributive injustice. Similarly, it may be overkill to give harsh discipline after a minor injury occurs to a co-worker.

On the other hand, OJT would predict the discipline of rule violators who are injured as a result of their own behavior would be different from that of rule violators who injure their coworkers. Discipline on violators who are injured would be less severe as the severity of the injury increases because supervisors may feel that injury itself is part of the punishment for the violators. It would be inappropriate distributive justice to add additional harsh discipline to severely injured violators as the injury and the harsh discipline would be disproportionate to the violation. Similarly, supervisors may view a minor injury as not adverse enough of a punishment for a rule-breaking behavior. The supervisor would need to add additional discipline to attain distributive justice. Thus, I predict that supervisors will be less likely to make harsh disciplinary decisions to more severely injured violators because the violators have already received enough adverse punishment. Moreover, the tendency to dole out harsh punishment will decrease as the injury to the violators becomes more severe.

H4: Personal injury severity and injury target have an interactive effect on discipline severity. When the targets of personal injury are coworkers, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions when the injuries to the coworkers are severe than they will when the injuries to the coworkers are minor. On the other hand, when the targets of personal injury are the violators themselves, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions when the injuries to the violators are minor than they will when the injuries to the violators are severe.

Demographic Predictors of Discipline Severity

1. Supervisor Gender

Although previous research in this field did not reveal any gender influence in supervisory discipline severity, gender differences exist when people make certain decisions. For example, Bigoness and Dubose (1985)'s study found that female arbitrators rendered decisions that were more favourable towards grievant than male arbitrators did. Although this result applies in the arbitration context, in order to assess the influences of the three situational factors when excluding the possible influence of supervisor gender on their discipline severity, I assessed supervisor gender in the present research.

2. Supervisor Age, Years of Work Experience, Years of Supervisory Experience, Supervisory Level, Similar Disciplinary Experience

Although previous research in this field did not reveal any influences of supervisor age, years of work experience, years of supervisory experience, supervisory level and

similar disciplinary experience on their discipline severity, experienced people may make decisions differently from inexperienced people. For example, Bemmels (1991)'s study found that more experienced arbitrators tended to decide either completely in favour of the grievant or completely in favour of the employer, whereas, less experienced arbitrators tended to make compromise decisions. Although this result applies in the arbitration context, I assessed years of work experience, years of supervisory experience and similar disciplinary experience in this study. I also assessed supervisor age and supervisory level because they tend to be correlated with years of work experience, years of supervisory experience and similar disciplinary experience. I will statistically remove the effects of any demographic variable that is related to discipline severity.

3. Type of employing organization

Although previous research in this field did not reveal any influence of type of employing organization on supervisors' discipline severity, different types of organizations may have different rules, policies and regulations. Such differences of rules and policies may influence supervisors' discipline severity. Therefore, I examined the possible influence of the type of employing organization on supervisors' discipline severity.

4. Violator Gender

Previous research examining the effects of violator gender on supervisors' discipline severity has led to mixed results. On one hand, Bisking, Ree, Green, and Odom (2003) found that supervisors appeared to be more lenient with female violators than male violators in sexual harassment violations and more lenient with male violators

than female violators regarding theft and drug test violations. However, Fukami and Hopkins (1993) did not find any influence of violator gender on supervisors' discipline severity regarding safety rule violation. Given these mixed results, I assigned gender-neutral names to rule violators.

Method

Procedure

Participants in the main study are supervisors and managers. After agreeing to participate, participants read three scenarios describing different safety rule violations. Each scenario contained the same combination of three situational factors. Participants decided how to discipline the rule violator after reading each scenario. They also completed the causality perception scale for all three scenarios, the demographic questionnaire, and additional items not part of the study.

Scenario Development

I used scenarios in my experiment. The scenarios described one of three safety rule violations. Each scenario contained one level from three different situational factors: causality ambiguity, injury severity, and injury target. Thus, my design called for the creation of 24 different scenarios. Appendix A contains the 24 scenarios.

I manipulated the three situational factors within the scenarios in the following manner. I manipulated causality ambiguity by either providing an external cause for the rule violation or not providing an external cause for the rule violation. I manipulated severity of injury by sentences describing either a severe injury resulting from the rule violation or a minor injury resulting from the rule violation. I manipulated injury target by indicating that the violators injured either their coworkers or themselves.

Pilot study

I conducted a pilot study to determine whether I successfully manipulated causality ambiguity and injury severity. I also pretested the scenarios for readability. Participants in my pilot study were undergraduate students from a western Canadian university. After agreeing to participate, participants read three scenarios and completed two manipulation check items after reading each scenario.

Data Collection Procedure

For the main study, I looked for participants serving in managerial or supervisory positions who currently make or have made disciplinary decisions as part of their job. I contacted potential participants who worked in businesses located in a medium sized western Canadian city and invited them to participate in my research. For all the people that I contacted, I asked whether they either currently make or have made disciplinary decisions as part of their job before inviting them to participate. I also asked supervisors and managers to distribute research materials to other people in their organization who make disciplinary decisions.

Design

I used an experimental design to test my hypotheses. Specifically, I tested the effects of three independent variables (causality ambiguity, injury severity, and injury target) on discipline severity. In addition, I statistically controlled for the effects of any relevant demographic variables.

Measures

Discipline Severity

I used Fukami & Hopkins (1993)'s scale to measure discipline severity. Their scale is a single-item scale with six anchors. These six anchors represent possible disciplinary actions that supervisors may take (e.g., 1 = "Ignore the incidence and do nothing." to 6 = "Discharge the violator from employment with the company." Appendix B contains the scale. Subjects completed the scale after reading each of the three scenarios. Similar to Rosen & Jerdee (1974), I used the mean of the three scores as the index of discipline severity. The scale scores in the present research were very reliable ($\alpha = .94$).

Causality Perception

Participants in the main study reported their causality perception for each scenario using a one-item scale: "The accident is completely the violator's fault." Anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Appendix C contains the scale. The causality perception score was the mean of the three items. Scale scores were very reliable ($\alpha = .95$).

Manipulation Check

Pilot participants indicated for each scenario the degree to which the violator was at fault as well as the injury severity with Likert type items (See Appendix D).

Participants rated causality ambiguity for each scenario with the following item: "The accident is completely the violator's fault." Anchors ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The causality ambiguity score was the mean of the three items. Scale score reliability was adequate ($\alpha = .77$).

Participants rated injury severity for each scenario with the following item: “The injured person’s injury is severe.” Responses range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The injury severity score was the mean of the three items. Scale score reliability was adequate ($\alpha = .76$).

Demographic Variables

I used a questionnaire to assess the relation between discipline severity and the demographic variables. Appendix E contains the questionnaire.

Analysis

I used t-tests to analyze the effectiveness of the two manipulations. I examined correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) results to assess the effects of the demographic variables on discipline severity. I also conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and follow-up t-tests to assess the four hypotheses. Additionally, I used Baron and Kenny’s (1986) method to assess whether causality perception mediated the causality ambiguity and discipline severity relation. To document a mediating relation, the predictor should be related to the mediator, the mediator should be related to the criterion, and the mediator should predict criterion variance after statistical control of the predictor. Complete mediation occurs when the predictor does not account for unique criterion variance after statistical control of the mediator. I examined relationships by inspecting correlation values. I assessed unique contributions to criterion variance via inspection of the standardized regression coefficients associated with the predictor and mediator in the regression equation.

Results

Pilot Study

Participants

Forty introductory human resource management students from a western Canadian university participated in the study. I randomly assigned one of four scenarios manipulating injury severity and causality ambiguity to the pilot participants. I held injury target constant. Participants read scenarios pertaining to the co-worker as the injury target. Thirty-six participants (90%) completed the manipulation check.

Results of Manipulation Check

Causality Ambiguity

I conducted a t-test to check whether the causality ambiguity manipulation worked. Table 1 presents the results of that analysis. There is a statistically significant difference between the two groups of participants' perceptions of the causality of the rule violations ($t [34] = 7.03, p < .001, d = 2.36$). I also computed the standardized effect size (d value) between the means of the two groups of interest. This effect size is computed by expressing the differences in the means of the two groups in pooled standard deviation unit (See Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996). Although stating that they are not rigid standards because you have to take into account the importance of the dependent variable, Cohen (1988) provided guidelines on the interpreting effect sizes. According to those guidelines, the effect size of 2.36 is a large effect. As can be seen in Table 1, participants that read the clear causality scenarios attributed more causality ($M = 5.54, sd = .98$) of the

rule violation to the violators than participants that read the ambiguous causality scenarios did ($M = 3.11$, $sd = 1.08$).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perceptions of Causality Grouped by Ambiguity Manipulation and t-test Result

Variable	Sub-Group	N	M	sd	t	df	d
Causality Ambiguity	Clear	18	5.54	.98			
	Ambiguous	18	3.11	1.08			
	Total	36	--	--	7.03***	34	2.36

Note: *** $p < .001$

Personal Injury Severity

I conducted a t-test analysis to check whether the personal injury severity manipulation was successful. Table 2 presents the results of that analysis. There is a statistically significant difference between the two groups of participants' perceptions of the personal injury severity of the rule violations ($t [34] = -4.79$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.60$). Participants reading the severe injury scenarios perceived more severe injury ($M = 5.11$, $sd = .99$) resulting from the rule violation than participants reading the minor injury scenarios ($M = 3.44$, $sd = 1.10$). The effect size is large. Taken together, the data support the effectiveness of the two manipulations.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perceptions of Injury Severity Grouped by Severity Manipulation and t-test Result

Variable	Sub-Group	N	M	sd	t	df	d
Injury Severity	Minor Injury	18	3.44	1.10			
	Severe Injury	18	5.11	.99			
	Total	36	--	--	-4.79***	34	-1.60

Note: *** $p < .001$

Language Influence

Perception of Causality Ambiguity grouped by Language

I also conducted t-test to examine whether the participants' native language influenced their perceptions of causality ambiguity. Table 3 presents the results of that analysis. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups' perceptions of causality ambiguity ($t [25.16] = -.04$, $p = .97$, $d = -.01$). Native English language participants had similar causality perceptions ($M = 4.31$, $sd = 1.95$) as non-native English language participants ($M = 4.33$, $sd = 1.31$).

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perception of Causality Ambiguity Grouped by Language and t-test Result

Variable	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
First Language						
English	16	4.31	1.95			
Non-English	20	4.33	1.31			
Total	36	--	--	-.04	25.16	-.01

Perception of Personal Injury Severity grouped by Language

I conducted t-test to check whether the native language of participants influenced their perceptions of injury severity in the scenarios. Table 4 presents the results of that analysis. There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups' perceptions of injury severity of the rule violations ($t [24.93] = -.58$, $p = .57$, $d = -.20$). As can be seen in Table 4, native English language participants reported injury severity perceptions ($M = 4.13$, $sd = 1.62$) similar to non-native English language participants' perceptions ($M = 4.40$, $sd = 1.07$).

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perception of Injury Severity Grouped by Language and t-test Result

Variable	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
First Language						
English	16	4.13	1.62			
Non-English	20	4.40	1.07			
Total	36	--	--	-.58	24.93	-.20

Main Study

Participants

I contacted supervisors and managers who worked in business located in a medium sized western Canadian city and invited them to participate in my research. For all the people that I contacted, I made sure with them that they either currently make or have made disciplinary decisions as part of their job before inviting them to participate. I randomly distributed 240 research packets (30 research packets for each of the eight types of scenarios) to supervisors and managers who had agreed to participate in the experiment or who had agreed to participate and also agreed to distribute the packets to other people working as supervisors in their organization. I waited outside some participants' offices while they completed the instruments. I also received completed instruments from 11 participants by mail. I picked up most of the completed research instruments from participants after leaving them with the participants for a few days. I obtained 207 (86%) completed research packets from the participants. Cell size in my 2 X 2 X 2 factorial design ranged from 24 to 28 people.

Table 5 contains the demographic data for the participants in the main study. One hundred and forty-eight (71.5%) male supervisors and 59 (28.5%) female supervisors participated in this study. Approximately 98% of the participants work in either a

supervisory, managerial and/or executive capacity. Approximately 2% of the participants owned their company. Most of the participants ($n = 194$, 93.7%) currently work in retail organizations such as grocery and discount stores, the food industry, or manufacturing organizations. Forty-six (22.2%) of the participants previously disciplined subordinates who committed rule violations similar to those described in the scenarios.

Table 5 Demographic Data for the participants in the Main Study

Variable	Sub-Group	Frequency	Percent
Supervisor Gender			
	Male	148	71.5
	Female	59	28.5
	Total	207	100.0
Supervisory level			
	First Line Supervisor	123	59.4
	Manager	74	35.7
	Executive/Company Officer	6	2.9
	Others	4	1.9
	Total	207	100.0
Type of Organization			
	Educational Institution	8	3.9
	Government Agency	2	1.0
	Retail	72	34.8
	Manufacturing	40	19.3
	Food Industry (e.g. restaurant)	82	39.6
	Others	3	1.4
	Total	207	100.0
Similar Disciplinary Experience			
	No	161	77.8
	Yes	46	22.2
	Total	207	100.0

Analysis of the Effects of the Control Variables

1. Age, Gender, Years of Work Experience, Years of Supervisory Experience, Similar Disciplinary Experience

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables. Age was related to years of work experiences ($r = .96, p < .01$), years of supervisory experiences ($r = .85, p < .01$) and similar disciplinary experience ($r_{pb} = .28, p < .01$). Years of work experience was related to years of supervisory experience ($r = .84, p < .01$) and similar disciplinary experience ($r_{pb} = .31, p < .01$). Years of supervisory experience was related to similar disciplinary experience ($r_{pb} = .33, p < .01$). Age, gender, years of work experience, and years of supervisory experience were not related to the discipline severity. The only demographic variable related to discipline severity was similar disciplinary experience ($r_{pb} = .18, p < .01$).

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of the study's Variables

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Discipline Severity	2.67	1.16								
2.Age	31.96	8.50	.05							
3.Gender	.29	.45	-.12	-.23**						
4.Years of Work Experience	12.76	8.61	.02	.96**	-.21**					
5.Years of Supervisory Experience	7.15	6.22	.00	.85**	-.15*	.84**				
6.Similar Disciplinary Experience	.22	.42	.18**	.28**	-.08	.31**	.33**			
7.Causality Ambiguity	.52	.50	.52***	.12	-.12	.13	.09	.07		
8.Injury severity	.50	.50	.10	.01	.09	.01	.06	.04	.01	
9. Injury target	.50	.50	.54***	.07	-.16*	.07	.00	.14*	.01	-.02

Note: N= 207 * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Gender, Similar Disciplinary Experience, Causality Ambiguity, Injury Severity, Injury Target with each other are biserial correlations.

Gender, Similar Disciplinary Experience, Causality Ambiguity, Injury Severity, Injury Target with Discipline Severity, Age, Years of Work Experience, Years of Supervisory Experience are point-biserial correlations.

Other values are Pearson correlation coefficient

Discipline Severity: (1= Ignore the incidence and do nothing, 2=Go over to the violator and point out that the violator has committed a serious violation, telling him you will penalize him if he ever does it again, 3=Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in the violator's file, 4=Suspend the violator from work for one day without pay, 5=Fine the violator \$250, 6=Discharge the violator from employment with the company)

Gender: (0=Male, 1=Female)

Similar Disciplinary Experience: (0=No, 1=Yes)

Causality Ambiguity: (0=Ambiguous, 1=Clear)

Injury severity: (0=Minor Injury, 1=Severe Injury)

Injury target: (0=Violator, 1=Co-worker)

2. Type of organization

I conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether it would influence the discipline severity. Table 7 and Table 8 present the result of that analysis.

Type of organization did not have a statistically significant influence on the discipline severity ($F [5,201] = 1.23, p = .30, \eta^2 = .03$).

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics of Discipline Severity grouped by Type of Organization

Variable	N	M	sd
Type of Organization			
Educational Institution	8	1.96	.60
Government Agency	2	3.17	1.18
Retail	72	2.86	1.25
Manufacturing	40	2.68	1.02
Food Industry (e.g. restaurant)	82	2.56	1.19
Others	3	2.78	.38
Total	207	2.67	1.16

Table 8 Effect of Type of Organization on the Discipline Severity

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	η^2
Type of Organization	8.26	5	1.65	1.23	.03
Error	270.07	201	1.34		
Total	278.33	206			

3. Supervisory Level

I conducted analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether supervisory level would influence the discipline severity. Table 9 and Table 10 present the result of that analysis. Supervisory level did not have a statistically significant influence on the discipline severity ($F [3,203] = 2.50, p = .06, \eta^2 = .04$).

Table 9 Descriptive Statistics of Discipline Severity Grouped by Supervisory Level

Variable	N	M	sd
Supervisory Level			
First Line Supervisor	123	2.54	1.11
Manager	74	2.94	1.20
Executive/Company Officer	6	2.50	1.59
Others	4	1.92	.63
Total	207	2.67	1.16

Table 10 Effect of Supervisory Level on the Discipline Severity

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	η^2
Supervisory Level	9.91	3	3.30	2.50	.04
Error	268.42	203	1.32		
Total	278.33	206			

Taken together, the data show that only similar disciplinary experience was related to the discipline severity. Therefore, I included that variable in all remaining analyses.

Hypotheses Tests

I conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to examine the effects of one control variable (i.e., similar disciplinary experience), the three independent variables, and the independent variable interactive effects on supervisors' discipline severity. I examined similar disciplinary experience first. I then assessed the three main effects after statistical control of similar disciplinary experience. I then assessed the unique effects of the three two-way interactions among all the three independent variables to the analysis. Finally, I analyzed the unique effect of the three-way interaction of the independent variables on discipline severity. Table 11 and Table 12 present the results of the analysis.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics of Discipline Severity Grouped by three Independent Variables

Causality Ambiguity	Injury severity	Injury Target	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>
Ambiguous	Minor injury	Violator	25	1.55	.50
		Co-worker	25	2.29	.70
		Total	50	1.92	.71
	Severe Injury	Violator	25	1.27	.33
		Co-worker	24	3.11	.75
		Total	49	2.17	1.09
	Total	Violator	50	1.41	.44
		Co-worker	49	2.69	.83
		Total	99	2.04	.92
Clear	Minor injury	Violator	25	2.97	.49
		Co-worker	28	3.31	.83
		Total	53	3.15	.70
	Severe Injury	Violator	28	2.36	.50
		Co-worker	27	4.36	1.11
		Total	55	3.34	1.32
	Total	Violator	53	2.65	.58
		Co-worker	55	3.82	1.10
		Total	108	3.25	1.06
Total	Minor injury	Violator	50	2.26	.87
		Co-worker	53	2.83	.92
		Total	103	2.55	.94
	Severe Injury	Violator	53	1.84	.69
		Co-worker	51	3.77	1.14
		Total	104	2.79	1.34
	Total	Violator	103	2.05	.81
		Co-worker	104	3.29	1.13
		Total	207	2.67	1.16

Table 12 Effects of Control Variables and three Independent Variables on Discipline Severity

Step	Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Partial η^2
1. Control Variables						
	Similar Disciplinary Experience	9.17	1	9.17	6.98**	.03
	Error	269.16	205	1.31	--	--
2. Main Effects						
	Causality Ambiguity (A)	70.47	1	70.47	117.80***	.37
	Injury severity (B)	2.99	1	2.99	4.99*	.02
	Injury target (C)	74.67	1	74.67	124.81***	.38
	Error	120.84	202	.60	--	--
3. All two-way Interaction						
	A * B	.07	1	.07	.14	.00
	A * C	.17	1	.17	.35	.00
	B * C	25.21	1	25.21	52.54***	.21
	Error	95.49	199	.48	--	--
4. Three-Way Interaction						
	A*B*C	1.02	1	1.02	2.14	.01
	Error	94.47	198	.48	--	--
	Total	1755.67	207			

Note: N=207 * p< .05 ** p< .01 *** p< .001 SS: Type III Sum of Squares

Similar disciplinary experience has a statistically significant relation with discipline severity ($F [1,205] = 6.98, p < .01, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .03$). Supervisors who had previously disciplined similar rule violations made harsher discipline decisions ($M = 3.07, sd = 1.26$) than supervisors who had no similar disciplinary experience ($M = 2.56, sd = 1.11$).

Table 13 Descriptive Statistics of Discipline Severity Grouped by Similar Disciplinary Experience

Variable	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>
Similar Disciplinary Experience			
Yes	46	3.07	1.26
No	161	2.56	1.11
Total	207	--	--

Causality Ambiguity

Causality ambiguity has a statistically significant effect on supervisors' discipline severity when excluding the effects of the control variable and the other two independent variables first ($F [1,202] = 117.80, p < .001, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .37$). As can be seen in Table 11, supervisors will make harsher discipline decisions ($M = 3.25, sd = 1.06$) when the causality of the rule violation is clear than supervisors will do ($M = 2.04, sd = .92$) in the ambiguous causality condition. The factor accounted for 37% of the variance of the discipline severity when excluding the effects of the control variable and other two independent variables first. These results supported Hypothesis 1.

I also conducted correlation and regression analyses to test the theoretical rationale for Hypothesis 1. That is, causality attribution mediates the effects of causality ambiguity on discipline severity. The first analysis I conducted was a t-test to determine whether causality ambiguity affected participants' causality perception. Table 14 presents the results of that analysis. Causality ambiguity has a statistically significant influence on participants' causality perception ($t [142.72] = 19.13, p < .001, d = 2.69$). The effect size is large. Supervisors reading the clear causality scenarios attributed more causality ($M = 5.81, sd = .71$) to the violators than supervisors reading the ambiguous causality scenarios ($M = 2.84, sd = 1.39$).

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Causality Perception Grouped by Causality Ambiguity and t-test Result

Variable	Sub-Group	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
Causality Ambiguity	Clear	108	5.81	.71			
	Ambiguous	99	2.84	1.39			
	Total	207	--	--	19.13***	142.72	2.69

Note: *** $p < .001$

I also conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis using discipline severity as the criterion. I entered causality perception first and the causality ambiguity factor second. Table 15 and Table 16 present the result of that analysis.

Table 15 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Causality Ambiguity, Causality Perception, and Discipline Severity

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	1	2
1. Discipline Severity	2.67	1.16		
2. Causality Ambiguity	.52	.50	.52***	
3. Causality Perception	4.39	1.84	.55***	.81***

Note: N= 207 * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Causality Ambiguity with Discipline Severity and Perception of Causality are point-biserial correlations.

Other values are Pearson correlation coefficient

Discipline Severity: (1= Ignore the incidence and do nothing, 2=Go over to the violator and point out that the violator has committed a serious violation, telling him you will penalize him if he ever does it again, 3=Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in the violator's file, 4=Suspend the violator from work for one day without pay, 5=Fine the violator \$250, 6=Discharge the violator from employment with the company)

Causality Ambiguity: (0=Ambiguous, 1=Clear)

Causality Perception: (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4=Neither Disagree nor Agree, 5=Slightly Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree)

Table 16 Effects of Causality Ambiguity and Causality Perception on Discipline Severity

Step	Variable	R	R ²	R ² Change	df	Beta	F
1. One Predictor		.55	.30	.30	1	--	88.33***
	Causality Perception	--	--	--	1	.55***	--
2. Two Predictors		.56	.32	.02	2	--	47.41***
	Causality Perception	--	--	--	1	.37***	--
	Causality Ambiguity	--	--	--	1	.22*	--

Note: N=207 * p< .05 ** p< .01 *** p< .001

I found a statistically significant relation between causality ambiguity and causality perception ($r_{pb} = .81, p < .001$). I report that relation in Table 15. This correlation is

very high as I expected because the manipulation of causality was successful. Table 16 contains the hierarchical regression data. Causality perception has a statistically significant effect on discipline severity above and beyond the influence of causality ambiguity ($\beta = .37, p < .001$). Causality ambiguity has a statistically significant effect on discipline severity above and beyond the influence of causality perception ($\beta = .22, p < .05$). The results in Tables 14-16 show that causality attribution partially mediates the relation between causality ambiguity and discipline severity.

Injury Severity

Severity of injury has a statistically significant effect on supervisors' discipline severity when excluding the effects of the control variable and the other two independent variables first ($F [1,202] = 4.99, p < .05, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .02$). Table 11 reveals that supervisors will make harsher discipline decisions ($M = 2.79, sd = 1.34$) when the injury resulting from the rule violation is severe than supervisors in the minor injury condition will do ($M = 2.55, sd = .94$). These results support Hypothesis 2; however, the effect size is small.

Injury Target

Injury target has a statistically significant effect on supervisors' discipline severity when excluding the effects of the control variable and the other two independent variables first ($F [1,202] = 124.81, p < .001, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .38$). Table 11 shows that supervisors will make harsher discipline decisions ($M = 3.29, sd = 1.13$) when the injury targets are the coworkers of the violators than supervisors in the condition where the injury targets are the violators themselves will do ($M = 2.05, sd = .81$). The factor accounted for 38% of the variance of the discipline severity when excluding the effects of

the control variable and the other two independent variables first. These results support Hypothesis 3.

Interactions

I also examined the other interactions although I didn't have specific hypotheses about them. The two-way interactive effect of causality ambiguity and injury severity on discipline judgment was not statistically significant ($F [1,199] = .14, p = .71, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .00$). The two-way interactive effect of causality ambiguity and injury target on discipline severity was not statistically significant ($F [1,199] = .35, p = .56, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .00$). The three-way interaction of the three independent variables did not have a statistically significant effect on discipline severity ($F [1,198] = 2.14, p = .15, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .01$).

The two-way interaction of personal injury severity and injury target have a statistically significant interactive effect on supervisors' discipline severity after excluding the effects of the control variable, the three independent variables, and the other two-way interactions on discipline severity ($F [1,199] = 52.54, p < .001, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .21$). Figure 1 illustrates the interactive effect of injury severity and injury target on discipline severity.

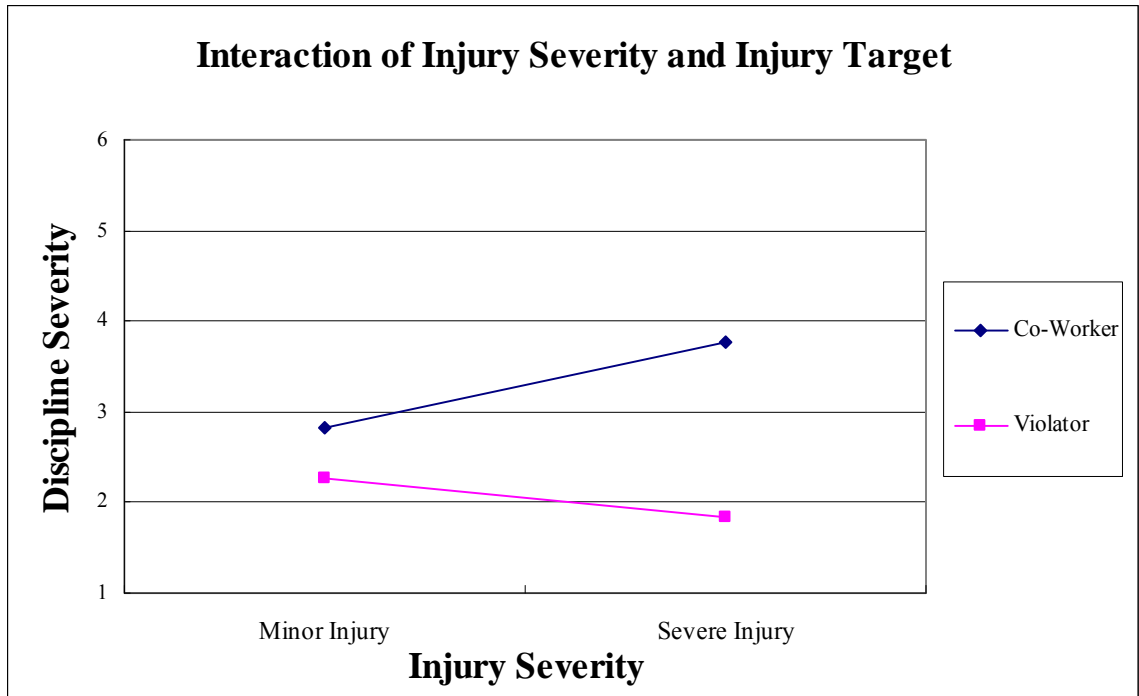


Figure 1 Interaction of Injury Severity and Injury target on Discipline Severity

I also conducted follow-up t-tests to examine the nature of the interaction. Tables 17-20 contain the results.

Table 17 Coworker Injury Severity Effects on Discipline Severity

Variable	Sub-Group	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
Injury Severity	Severe	51	3.77	1.14			
	Minor	53	2.83	.92			
	Total	104	--	--	4.66***	102	.91

Note: *** p<.001

Table 18 Violator Injury Severity Effects on Discipline Severity

Variable	Sub-Group	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
Injury Severity	Severe	53	1.84	.69			
	Minor	50	2.26	.87			
	Total	103	--	--	-2.68**	93.60	-.53

Note: ** p<.01

Table 19 Discipline Severity as a Function of Severe Injury

Variable	Sub-Group	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
Injury Target	Co-worker	51	3.77	1.14			
	Violator	53	1.84	.69			
	Total	104	--	--	10.40***	82.14	2.05

Note: *** p<.001

Table 20 Discipline Severity as a function of Minor Injury

Variable	Sub-Group	N	<u>M</u>	<u>sd</u>	t	df	d
Injury Target	Co-worker	53	2.83	.92			
	Violator	50	2.26	.87			
	Total	103	--	--	3.23**	101	.64

Note: **p<.01

There is a statistically significant influence of injury severity on discipline severity when the injury target is the co-worker ($t [102] = 4.66, p < .001, d = .91$). The effect size is large. When the targets of personal injury are coworkers, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions ($M = 3.77, sd = 1.14$) when the injuries to the coworkers are severe than supervisors will make when the injuries to the coworkers are minor ($M = 2.83, sd = .92$).

There is a statistically significant influence of injury severity on discipline severity when the injury target is the violator ($t [93.60] = -2.68, p < .01, d = -.53$). The effect size is large. When the targets of personal injury are the violators themselves, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions ($M = 2.26, sd = .87$) when the injury to the violators are minor than supervisors will make when the injuries to the violators are severe ($M = 1.84, sd = .69$).

Injury target has a statistically significant influence on discipline severity when the injury is severe ($t [82.14] = 10.40, p < .001, d = 2.05$). The effect size is large. When the

personal injury is severe, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions ($\underline{M} = 3.77$, $\underline{sd} = 1.14$) when the injury target is co-worker than supervisors will make when the injury target is the violator ($\underline{M} = 1.84$, $\underline{sd} = .69$).

Injury target has a statistically significant influence on discipline severity when injury is minor ($t [101] = 3.23$, $p < .01$, $d = .64$). The effect size is large. When the personal injury is minor, supervisors will make harsher disciplinary decisions ($\underline{M} = 2.83$, $\underline{sd} = .92$) when the injury target is co-worker than supervisors will make when the injury target is the violator ($\underline{M} = 2.26$, $\underline{sd} = .87$).

The results presented in Tables 17-20 support that injury target and injury severity have interactive effect on discipline severity. Moreover, the interaction pattern is consistent with the proposed direction.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

Although discipline is a common phenomenon in organizational management, there is relatively little research on the topic compared to other supervisory functions such as reward allocation and performance evaluation. Therefore, to extend current knowledge on supervisory discipline decisions, the present research examined the effects of three situational factors on supervisors' discipline severity. Specifically, I examined the effects of causality ambiguity, injury severity, injury target, and the severity X target interactive effect on discipline severity. Using attribution and justice theories as frameworks, I hypothesized that supervisors would give harsher discipline to rule violators in clear as opposed to ambiguous causality situations. I also hypothesized that supervisors would give harsher discipline to violators when injury resulting from the rule violation is severe than they would do when injury resulting from the rule violation is minor. I hypothesized that supervisors would make harsher disciplinary decisions when the injury targets are coworkers than they would do when the injury targets are the violators themselves. Data support the hypotheses.

OJT also implies that there may be an interactive effect of injury severity and injury target on supervisors' discipline severity. I hypothesized that when the injury targets were coworkers, supervisors would make harsher disciplinary decisions when the coworkers' injuries were severe than they would do when the coworkers suffered minor injuries. On the other hand, when the rule violators were the injury targets, supervisors would make harsher disciplinary decisions when the violators' injuries were minor than they would do when the violators suffered severe injuries. Data support the hypothesis.

The interactive result is interesting. Previous research shows that discipline becomes harsher as the severity of the consequences of rule violations (i.e. personal injury) increase. Here, I show that is not always the case. Supervisors may feel that an injury to rule violators is punishment in itself. Therefore, supervisors may be less likely to dole out punishment than they would have administered had the rule violator not been injured.

My findings are consistent with both the theoretical principles of Attribution Theory and Organizational Justice Theory. People examine causality and violation outcomes before administering discipline. That is, factors other than the actual behaviour affect discipline severity. My results are also consistent with Mischel (1977)'s treatment of strong and weak situations. The ambiguous causality scenarios appear to be weak situations in which supervisors and managers have more leeway to choose a disciplinary option than supervisors in strong situations as present in the clear causality scenarios.

My findings are consistent with previous research. Empirical data suggests that more severe consequences resulting from the rule violation will lead to more harsh discipline (e.g., Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Fukami & Hopkins, 1993). The results of the present research regarding injury severity following a rule violation are consistent with that literature. More severe co-worker injury will lead to more harsh discipline decisions than a minor injury. I extend their research by identifying another situational factor, injury target, in the rule violation context. My detection of the interactive effect of severity of personal injury and injury target extend the previous literature on supervisors' discipline severity. Moreover, such detection also provides new evidence for the existence of interaction of situational factors on supervisors' discipline severity. This

finding contradicts other's statements that supervisors make disciplinary decisions in a simple, linear fashion (Fukami & Hopkins, 1993).

Importance

In addition to providing support for the theories underlying my hypotheses, the present research is of practical importance. According to my findings, when supervisors face the same or similar rule violations, they will make different disciplinary decisions based on causality perceptions. Thus, they may appear to make inconsistent decisions. The inconsistent discipline judgment following the same rule violations may impact both the violator's and co-workers' perceptions of punishment fairness. When violators perceive that they are treated differently from others who have committed same violations, they will be likely to feel that they have been punished unfairly. Perceptions of unfairness may have detrimental effects on their morale and supervisory trust.

When other employees perceived that the supervisor treat violators differently they may feel that the supervisor punishes unfairly. Their perceptions of injustice can influence their attitudes towards the supervisor as well as turnover intentions (Niehoff, Paul, & Bunch, 1998). Therefore, it is critical for managers to understand the effects that inconsistent discipline decisions may have on organizational functioning and that managers take steps to ensure fairness perceptions while simultaneously safeguarding the confidentiality of those involved in the incident.

The findings of the present research also suggest that supervisors will discipline more harshly when the personal injury resulted from the rule violation is severe or the injury target is the co-worker of the violator. Although such inclinations of supervisory discipline are reasonable, data suggest that sometimes supervisors may overact to the

consequences resulting from the rule violations (e.g., Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Fukami & Hopkins, 1993). Moreover, when the violator end up with severe injury, supervisors may choose to ignore the violation and do not punish the violator. A manager who fails to react to a rule violation because the violator is severely injured might give the violator and other employees the impression that such violations are sometimes tolerated. Since coworkers may learn about organizational rules and how to behave correctly through observation of the discipline of the violators, they may feel confused about the behavior control by their supervisors. Such confusion may influence the effective function of punishment as a tool for managers to affect the behaviors of their subordinates.

Limitation, Contribution and Future Directions

Limitation

This research has boundary conditions that limit the generalizability of my conclusions. The scenarios I used in the present research described rule violations that could occur in three different types of organizations (i.e., manufacturing facilities, restaurants, and grocery/department stores). I do not know whether the conclusions I drew will generalize to other types of organizations such as banking or social service agencies. There is a need for additional research using supervisors in other types of organizations on this topic to assess better the generalizability of my results.

A second limitation is that the scenarios I used in the present research described three different safety rule violations in three different types of organizations. I do not know whether the conclusions I have drawn will generalize to other types of rule violations such as sexual harassment or employee theft. There is a need for additional

research using scenarios describing other types of rule violations on this topic to assess better the generalizability of my results.

A third limitation is that there are other factors that may influence discipline severity that I did not assess. For example, I did not assess factors such as union status, the presence of a progressive disciplinary policy, perpetrator violation history, disciplinary history, and job performance history. Similar to Fukami and Hopkins (1993), several participants commented on the relevance of other information in their disciplinary decision making. There is a need for additional research controlling these factors on this topic to assess better the generalizability of my results.

A fourth limitation is that one assumption of the present research is that all rule violations are negative. However, in some innovative organizations, or in organizations that focus on customer service, there may be some rule violations that lead to positive outcomes for the organization. For example, a hotel sales representative may violate the hotel room rate policies by giving a large discount to customers to attract more customers than its competitors and/or to avoid having unoccupied rooms. In those organizations, punishing an employee who violates the rule to achieve positive outcomes may send the wrong message to employees. Therefore, the positive outcomes of rule violations as a factor may also influence supervisors' disciplinary decisions. There is a need for additional research using rule violation with positive outcomes scenarios on this topic to assess better the generalizability of my results.

A fifth limitation is that participants in the present research made disciplinary decisions based on hypothetical scenarios. No matter what disciplinary decisions they made, there are no consequences to them due to their choices. However, in organizations,

when supervisors and managers administer discipline, they may consider the consequences such as violators' hostile attitudes towards them or arbitration issues they will face after they made disciplinary decisions. Such consideration may lead supervisors and managers to avoid using harsh discipline on violators. Therefore, participants may choose less harsh discipline in their daily job than they did in the present research. There is a need for future research to assess the generalizability of my results using field study.

Contribution

The present research extends the current literature on supervisors' discipline severity by filling some major gaps existing in the literature. Researchers have explicitly or implicitly assumed that the violator was fully responsible for the rule violation. There is little evidence on how supervisors administer punishment when full causality is less clear. However, in organizations it sometimes happens that when an employee commits a rule violation, the causality of the rule violation can not be fully attributed to the violator. Therefore, examining supervisors' disciplinary decision making when full blame is not attributed to the violator increases our knowledge of why supervisors discipline the way they do.

There is little understanding of how supervisors discipline rule violators who hurt themselves. However, in organizations sometimes it happens that violators hurt themselves when they break company rules. Based on the present findings it appears that supervisors take into account violator injury and reduce the level of discipline they would normally administer in other situations. To my knowledge, this relationship has not been documented in the organizational behavior literature.

The finding of a target X injury severity interaction shows that there are instances when more severe injury leads to less severe punishment than when the outcome of a violation is a minor injury. To my knowledge, this has not been previously documented. Moreover, I examined the impact of the violator hurting themselves on the subsequent punishment they receive. To my knowledge, this has never been studied and is notable because the results run counter to previous thought on punishment. My research provides new evidence for the existence of interactive effects of situational factors on discipline severity and implies that supervisors administer discipline on factors other than the behaviour the violator emits.

The present research has strengths. One feature is the use of experimental manipulation. Experimental manipulation allows for inferences of causality. Another notable feature of my research is the participants I used in the experiment. All participants either currently make or have made disciplinary decisions as part of their job. This allows for greater generalizability of the conclusions I am drawing.

Future Direction

Future research should examine the effects of other factors such as union involvement, type of rule violation, discipline history of the violator, and positive outcomes of rule violations on supervisors' discipline severity. In addition, research on real violations occurring in real organizations would better assess the generalizability of my findings. There is also need for future research to examine the interactive effects of situational factors on supervisors' discipline severity to test whether supervisors administer discipline in an interactive fashion or in a simple, linear fashion.

Individual differences such as supervisor personality effects on discipline severity are an avenue for future study. Indeed, researchers have called for such research (e.g., Arvey & Jones, 1985). Perhaps examining the interactive effects of situational factors and personality dispositions of supervisors may also be a good research direction on this topic since it will be useful to test whether supervisors administer discipline in an interactive fashion or in a simple, linear fashion.

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Appendix A (the Total 24 Scenarios with Discipline Severity Scale)

ID# AMC#1

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon, as Sandy was assembling a frame for a sofa with a screwdriver, a co-worker Jack got caught in some rollers used to move heavy boxes. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, but knowing that Jack could end up badly hurt, Sandy ran to help Jack. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally nicked Larry's arm resulting a small cut. Larry went to the company infirmary where the company nurse put antiseptic and a small band-aid on it. Right after the treatment, Larry went back to work.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file
- 4. Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Sandy \$250
- 6. Discharge Sandy from employment with the company

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Back in the kitchen, as Dale was working, a supervisor approached Dale and said that the big table Dale served was waiting for a long time for Dale to deliver their orders. The supervisor then said, "Serve the customer faster! Get them all the available orders right now!" Dale expressed concerns that it might not be safe to put everything on the tray. The supervisor said "It's a busy night and I don't have time to discuss it. Just get them their stuff." Dale obeyed the supervisor even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on a co-worker. The co-worker's left arm became slightly red from the temperature of the soup but the redness on his arm disappeared after a couple of minutes.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file
- 4. Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Dale \$250
- 6. Discharge Dale from employment with the company

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill but couldn't find the "Caution: Slippery When Wet" sign. Knowing it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign, Francis asked the immediate supervisor where the sign was. The supervisor said, "Don't worry about the sign. Just clean up the floor as soon as possible!" Francis went and cleaned up the floor. Shortly afterwards, a co-worker was walking down that aisle and slipped. The co-worker slipped on the floor and received a small bump on the back of his head. The bump was gone the next day.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis's file
- 4. Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Francis \$250
- 6. Discharge Francis from employment with the company

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon, as Sandy was assembling a frame for a sofa with a screwdriver, a co-worker Jack got caught in some rollers used to move heavy boxes. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, but knowing that Jack could end up badly hurt, Sandy ran to help Jack. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally nicked his own arm resulting a small cut. Sandy went to the company infirmary where the company nurse put antiseptic and a small band-aid on it. Right after the treatment, Sandy went back to work.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file
- 4. Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Sandy \$250
- 6. Discharge Sandy from employment with the company

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Back in the kitchen, as Dale was working, a supervisor approached Dale and said that the big table Dale served was waiting for a long time for Dale to deliver their orders. The supervisor then said, "Serve the customer faster! Get them all the available orders right now!" Dale expressed concerns that it might not be safe to put everything on the tray. The supervisor said "It's a busy night and I don't have time to discuss it. Just get them their stuff." Dale obeyed the supervisor even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on Dale. Dale's left arm became slightly red from the temperature of the soup but the redness on the arm disappeared after a couple of minutes.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file
- 4. Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Dale \$250
- 6. Discharge Dale from employment with the company

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill but couldn't find the "Caution: Slippery When Wet" sign. Knowing it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign, Francis asked the immediate supervisor where the sign was. The supervisor said, "Don't worry about the sign. Just clean up the floor as soon as possible!" Francis went and cleaned up the floor. Shortly afterwards, Francis was walking down that aisle and slipped. Francis slipped on the floor and received a small bump on the back of the head. The bump was gone the next day.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis's file
- 4. Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Francis \$250
- 6. Discharge Francis from employment with the company

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon, as Sandy was assembling a frame for a sofa with a screwdriver, a co-worker Jack got caught in some rollers used to move heavy boxes. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, but knowing that Jack could end up badly hurt, Sandy ran to help Jack. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally poked Larry's right eye. Larry was in a great deal of pain and went to the hospital where a doctor said Larry had badly injured the eye. It has been four days since the accident. Larry has not returned to work and still can not see clearly.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file*
- 4. *Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Sandy \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Sandy from employment with the company*

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Back in the kitchen, as Dale was working, a supervisor approached Dale and said that the big table Dale served was waiting for a long time for Dale to deliver their orders. The supervisor then said, "Serve the customer faster! Get them all the available orders right now!" Dale expressed concerns that it might not be safe to put everything on the tray. The supervisor said "It's a busy night and I don't have time to discuss it. Just get them their stuff." Dale obeyed the supervisor even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on a co-worker scalding him. The co-worker ended up receiving major burns on his left arm.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file*
- 4. *Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Dale \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Dale from employment with the company*

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill but couldn't find the "Caution: Slippery When Wet" sign. Knowing it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign, Francis asked the immediate supervisor where the sign was. The supervisor said, "Don't worry about the sign. Just clean up the floor as soon as possible!" Francis went and cleaned up the floor. Shortly afterwards, a co-worker was walking down that aisle and slipped. The co-worker landed flat on his back, smacked the back of his head hard on the floor, and ended up with a severe concussion.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis's file
- 4. Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Francis \$250
- 6. Discharge Francis from employment with the company

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Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon, as Sandy was assembling a frame for a sofa with a screwdriver, a co-worker Jack got caught in some rollers used to move heavy boxes. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, but knowing that Jack could end up badly hurt, Sandy ran to help Jack. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally poked his own right eye. Sandy was in a great deal of pain and went to the hospital where a doctor said Sandy had badly injured the eye. It has been four days since the accident. Sandy has not returned to work and still can not see clearly.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file*
- 4. *Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Sandy \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Sandy from employment with the company*

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Back in the kitchen, as Dale was working, a supervisor approached Dale and said that the big table Dale served was waiting for a long time for Dale to deliver their orders. The supervisor then said, "Serve the customer faster! Get them all the available orders right now!" Dale expressed concerns that it might not be safe to put everything on the tray. The supervisor said "It's a busy night and I don't have time to discuss it. Just get them their stuff." Dale obeyed the supervisor even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on Dale scalding him. Dale ended up receiving major burns on the left arm.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file*
- 4. *Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Dale \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Dale from employment with the company*

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill but couldn't find the "Caution: Slippery When Wet" sign. Knowing it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign, Francis asked the immediate supervisor where the sign was. The supervisor said, "Don't worry about the sign. Just clean up the floor as soon as possible!" Francis went and cleaned up the floor. Shortly afterwards, Francis was walking down that aisle and slipped. Francis landed flat on the back, smacked the back of the head hard on the floor, and ended up with a severe concussion.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
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- 4. Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Francis \$250
- 6. Discharge Francis from employment with the company

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon after talking about a customer order with a co-worker, Sandy who was holding a screw driver at the time, wanted to get back to the work station to finish a job. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, Sandy began to run down the aisle. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally nicked Larry's arm resulting a small cut. Larry went to the company infirmary where the company nurse put antiseptic and a small band-aid on it. Right after the treatment, Larry went back to work.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
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- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file
- 4. Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Sandy \$250
- 6. Discharge Sandy from employment with the company

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Trying to serve the people at the big table faster, Dale put a lot of stuff on the tray even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on a co-worker. The co-worker's left arm became slightly red from the temperature of the soup but the redness on his arm disappeared after a couple of minutes.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file*
- 4. *Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Dale \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Dale from employment with the company*

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill and failed to bring the “Caution: Slippery When Wet” sign although Francis knew it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign. Francis cleaned up the floor and went away. Shortly afterwards, a co-worker was walking down that aisle and slipped. The co-worker slipped on the floor and received a small bump on the back of his head. The bump was gone the next day.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

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- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
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- 4. *Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay*
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Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon after talking about a customer order with a co-worker, Sandy who was holding a screw driver at the time, wanted to get back to the work station to finish a job. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, Sandy began to run down the aisle. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally nicked his own arm resulting a small cut. Sandy went to the company infirmary where the company nurse put antiseptic and a small band-aid on it. Right after the treatment, Sandy went back to work.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
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Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Trying to serve the people at the big table faster, Dale put a lot of stuff on the tray even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on Dale. Dale's left arm became slightly red from the temperature of the soup but the redness on the arm disappeared after a couple of minutes.

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- 4. *Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Dale \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Dale from employment with the company*

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill and failed to bring the “Caution: Slippery When Wet” sign although Francis knew it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign. Francis cleaned up the floor and went away. Shortly afterwards, Francis was walking down that aisle and slipped. Francis slipped on the floor and received a small bump on the back of the head. The bump was gone the next day.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an “X” in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis’s file*
- 4. *Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Francis \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Francis from employment with the company*

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon after talking about a customer order with a co-worker, Sandy who was holding a screw driver at the time, wanted to get back to the work station to finish a job. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, Sandy began to run down the aisle. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally poked Larry's right eye. Larry was in a great deal of pain and went to the hospital where a doctor said Larry had badly injured the eye. It has been four days since the accident. Larry has not returned to work and still can not see clearly.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file
- 4. Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Sandy \$250
- 6. Discharge Sandy from employment with the company

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Trying to serve the people at the big table faster, Dale put a lot of stuff on the tray even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on a co-worker scalding him. The co-worker ended up receiving major burns on his left arm.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file
- 4. Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Dale \$250
- 6. Discharge Dale from employment with the company

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill and failed to bring the “Caution: Slippery When Wet” sign although Francis knew it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign. Francis cleaned up the floor and went away. Shortly afterwards, a co-worker was walking down that aisle and slipped. The co-worker landed flat on his back, smacked the back of his head hard on the floor, and ended up with a severe concussion.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an “X” in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis’s file*
- 4. *Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Francis \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Francis from employment with the company*

Scenario#1

Sandy works in a furniture manufacturing factory assembling furniture. One afternoon after talking about a customer order with a co-worker, Sandy who was holding a screw driver at the time, wanted to get back to the work station to finish a job. Despite knowing that it was against company policy to run in the plant, Sandy began to run down the aisle. As Sandy was running down the aisle, another co-worker, Larry, entered the aisle where Sandy was running. Sandy and Larry collided and both fell down. The screwdriver in Sandy's hand accidentally poked his own right eye. Sandy was in a great deal of pain and went to the hospital where a doctor said Sandy had badly injured the eye. It has been four days since the accident. Sandy has not returned to work and still can not see clearly.

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)**

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Sandy and point out that Sandy has committed a serious violation, telling Sandy you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Sandy's file
- 4. Suspend Sandy from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Sandy \$250
- 6. Discharge Sandy from employment with the company

Scenario#2

Dale works as a server in a restaurant. One very busy night, Dale was serving many tables including a large group of people at a big table. Trying to serve the people at the big table faster, Dale put a lot of stuff on the tray even though Dale knew the company policy on overloading trays. As it turned out, Dale lost control of the tray before reaching the table. One of the items on the tray, a bowl of soup fell off of the tray and landed on Dale scalding him. Dale ended up receiving major burns on the left arm.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the box)

- 1. Ignore the incidence and do nothing
- 2. Go over to Dale and point out that Dale has committed a serious violation, telling Dale you will penalize him if he ever does it again
- 3. Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Dale's file
- 4. Suspend Dale from work for one day without pay
- 5. Fine Dale \$250
- 6. Discharge Dale from employment with the company

Scenario#3

Francis works in a supermarket performing tasks such as stocking shelves and mopping floors. One day, a customer accidentally broke a bottle of olive oil. Francis went to get the equipment to clean up the spill and failed to bring the “Caution: Slippery When Wet” sign although Francis knew it was against store rules to mop the floor without the sign. Francis cleaned up the floor and went away. Shortly afterwards, Francis was walking down that aisle and slipped. Francis landed flat on the back, smacked the back of the head hard on the floor, and ended up with a severe concussion.

Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?

(Please indicate your choice by placing an “X” in the box)

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to Francis and point out that Francis has committed a serious violation, telling Francis you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in Francis’s file*
- 4. *Suspend Francis from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine Francis \$250*
- 6. *Discharge Francis from employment with the company*

Appendix B (Discipline Severity Scale)

**Which of the following actions would you take if you were the supervisor?
(Please indicate your choice by placing an “X” in the box)**

- 1. *Ignore the incidence and do nothing*
- 2. *Go over to the violator and point out that the violator has committed a serious violation, telling him you will penalize him if he ever does it again*
- 3. *Prepare a written reprimand to be placed in the violator’s file*
- 4. *Suspend the violator from work for one day without pay*
- 5. *Fine the violator \$250*
- 6. *Discharge the violator from employment with the company*

Appendix C (Causality Perception)

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale.

In the factory example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Sandy's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In the restaurant example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Dale's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In the grocery store example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Francis's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D (Manipulation Check)

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by circling a number on the scale.

In the factory example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Sandy's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The injured person's injury is severe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In the restaurant example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Dale's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The injured person's injury is severe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In the grocery store example:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The accident is completely Francis's fault.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The injured person's injury is severe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E (Demographic Questionnaire)

Please answer the following questions or circle around the most suitable answer.

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Years of work experience: _____ years
4. Years of supervisory experience: _____ years
5. Current Position:
 - 1) First line supervisor 2) Manager 3) Executive/Company officer
 - 4) Others (please specify _____)
6. What kind of organization do you work in? (Write the number in the space) _____
 - 1) Educational Institution
 - 2) Government Agency
 - 3) Retail
 - 4) Manufacturing
 - 5) Health Care
 - 6) Banking
 - 7) Food Industry (e.g. restaurant)
 - 8) Social service agency
 - 9) Service company (counselling center, law firm)
 - 10) Others (please specify _____)
7. Have you ever been in a situation similar to the three stories above? YES NO
If yes, please explain.