# Analysis of Bilateral Effects between Social Undermining and Co-Creation among University Faculty Members

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## Abstract

Understanding the social undermining is increasing important in organizational literature both because of its relation with job performance and because of its collective cost to individuals and organizations. This article argued that social undermining can effect on co-creation among faculty members. The study adopted a descriptive–correlational method. The statistical population of the study consisted university faculty members in Iran, that 235 members were selected as the participants using stratified random sampling consistent with the sample size. Social undermining was examined using Duffy et al. (2002) Questionnaire and co-creation were examined using researcher-made questionnaire based on co-creation DART model. Also the reliability of the questionnaire were computed using Cronbach's alpha (0.94 for social undermining and 0.96 for co-creation questionnaire).Results based on data from a sample of university faculty members showed a negative relationship between social undermining and co-creation and were meaningful at 0.05 level of significance.

**Key words:** co-creation, faculty member, social undermining

## 1. Introduction

As higher education institutions are increasingly facing with financial and accreditation pressures, university leaders should look for new approaches to ensure individual and group behaviors and effectiveness. Researchers have been interested in the characteristics, structures, and processes that may enhance the performance of groups on flatter organizational structure and have more team-based work for several decades. They have increasingly realized that segmentation and the development of close relationships are essential for achieving their goals (Lambert, 2008) and close relationships between co-workers can provide a focal employee with a sense of identity, support, and friendship (Bowler & Brass, 2006). Interactions and close relationships enable the co-creation of value, which is manifested in increased loyalty (Ganesan, 1994), increased efficiencies (Stank et al., 2003) and increased innovation (Huston & Sakkab, 2006).

In spite of the significance of co-creation in academic activities, higher education researcher has not paid enough attention to this issue, as well as, negative interpersonal interactions in the university workplace. One of the negative interactions in the workplace is social undermining.

Understanding the dark side of social networks in fostering social undermining is particularly important given that social undermining and social networks both play critical roles in affecting employees' organizational lives and organizations' functioning. Social undermining reflects negative workplace interactions and can cause employees to indicate various negative responses—affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Duffy et al., 2002).

Previous research findings that social undermining behaviors have negative organizational consequences such as increased counterproductive work behaviors and decreased job satisfaction. These behaviors can also cause negative personal outcomes such as depression, decreased self-esteem, and psychosomatic symptoms (Duffy et al., 2006). Thus social undermining can influenced close relationships and co-creation in organizational context. Therefore, this article aims is study of bilateral affects between social undermining and co-creation among

university faculty members.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Social Undermining

Although the label "social undermining" was first introduced by Vinokur and Van Ryn (1993), but more elaborated explanation of the concept has been based on an article titled "the negative side of social interaction" written by Rook (1984). Other researchers Ruehlman and Karoly (1991), focused on the negative social exchange issues which they mentioned as intentional interference, ridicule and insensitivity in interpersonal relationships.

Definition of the *social undermining* construct, includes behaviors directed toward a target that indicate or display (1) negative affect (anger, dislike), (2) negative evaluation of the target in terms of his or her attributes, actions, and efforts (criticism), and/or (3) "actions that hinder the attainment of instrumental goals" (Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996, p. 167). Another useful study and conceptualization of the construct was presented by Duffy et al. (2002). They defined social undermining as behaviors that hinder another's ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favorable reputation. They also give examples of undermining behaviors as intentionally making someone feel incompetent, withholding important or required information, giving the silent treatment, talking a colleague's behind and spreading rumors about him or her.

Social undermining behaviors include: (a) inordinate delay, (b) competing for status, and (c) the giving of misleading information, all of which may produce unfavorable outcomes for perpetrators, victims and the organizations that they are situated in (Greenbaum et al., 2012).

According to Duffy et al. (2006) social undermining can take a variety of forms and may vary in the manner in which it damages a relationship or a reputation. For example, undermining may take the form of *direct* actions, such as intentionally saying derogatory things about a person, rejecting someone outright, or belittling someone's ideas. These direct forms of undermining hinder relationships and reputation through the performance of some action. However, undermining may also be effectively accomplished through *withholding,* such as withholding of needed information or failing to defend someone (p,333). Another dimension on which undermining behaviors may vary is a verbal-physical one. Verbal undermining behaviors may include making derogatory comments to a target as well as giving the target the "silent treatment" or failing to transmit important information to the target. The former is an active form of verbal undermining, and the latter are examples of passive verbal undermining. Lastly, an undermining behavior is intentional, although different parties (such as the actor and the target) may have different perceptions regarding intent.

The definitions of undermining suggest that they are often unethical and antisocial behaviors. Furthermore, antisocial behaviors such as social undermining have been seen as proactive or instrumental forms of aggression (e.g., Dodge, 1991), attempts to get—what one wants by being aggressive (Salmivalli, 2001, p. 386). Finally, Crossley (2009) gives a definition similar to the one that was presented earlier by Duffy et al. (2002) ant points out that social undermining refers to the negative and intentional behaviors at destroying another person's reputation, his ability to carry out his work, or his ability to establish and maintain positive relationships.

It is however significant to explore and prevent social undermining in workplaces particularly in academic settings in order to foster trust and cooperation among faculty members. Failing to do this can result in damaging consequences to the faculties' success, reputation and job retention. Above all, it may prevent co-creation among faculty members. The next section is dealt with the concept of co-creation as other variable of the present study.

### 2.2 Co-creation

Co-creation of value, a new conception of relationships among firms, customers, employees, and suppliers is put forward (Lusch & Vargo, 2006b): firms are invited to shift from "value added" to "value aided" (Priem, 2002).

In the process of 'value co-creation', parties integrate resources and combine their capabilities to generate that which is of value for them (Lusch, Vargo, & O'Brien, 2007; Lusch et al., 2010). Cova and Salle (2008) emphasized the role played by the networks of relationships, pointing out that "co-creation is carried out, in a many-to-many approach between a supplier and his network in interaction with a customer and his network" (p. 272).

Value is co-created when the parties involved in a relationship combine their knowledge and skills in order to achieve higher profits (Vargo & Lusch 2004). Core competencies in this environment are not physical assets but intangible resources that can produce effects such as skills and technology (Glazer, 1991; Day, 1994; Constantin

& Lusch, 1994). Co-creation allows the participants from each function to see the information from a bigger context and encourages discussion, which can generate feedback, amplifications or modifications that were not originally considered.

With respect to the components, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b) identify four building blocks of interactions for co-creation of value, namely: dialogue, access, risk-benefit assessment and transparency (acronym: DART). Dialogue and learning appear as crucial elements linked to co-creation , as well as the focus on experience (Prahalad, 2004; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008) and on processes, resources and practices (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), customer value generating processes, supplier value-generating processes, and encounter processes. Moreover, an integrated network mentality appears essential to it (Lusch & Vargo 2006a).

From a managerial perspective, the work of Prahalad et al. (2004) is of particular interest (Payne et al., 2008) as their research suggests a more holistic generative framework describing the fundamental building blocks of value co-creation practices, including Dialogue, Access, Risk management and Transparency (DART framework). Building block of interaction in DART model is shown in Figure 1.
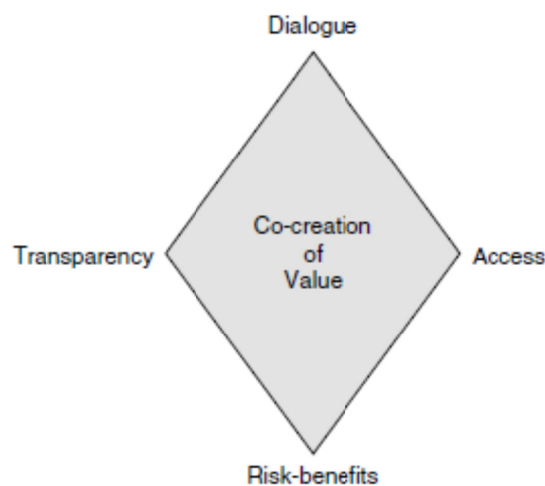


Figure 1. Building Block of Co-Creation, based on Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004)

According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Dialogue is an important element in the co-creation view. It involves interactivity, deep engagement, the ability and willingness to act on both sides (user and developer). Dialogue is difficult if user do not have the same access and transparency to information. Access and transparency are critical to have a meaningful dialogue. Dialogue, access and transparency can lead to a clear assessment by the consumer of the risk-benefits of decision.

2.2.1 Dialogue

Dialogue means interactivity, deep engagement, and a propensity to act on both sides (Prahalad et al., 2004, p. 23). It is about creating a conversation where the participating parties are equal, and thus also implies shared learning and communication. It entails empathic understanding built around experiencing what consumers experience and this mutual dialogue has to take place around issues that are interests both client and the organization. It also requires a forum where the dialogue can occur, and also rules of engagement are necessary to create an orderly and productive interaction.

Other researchers (Ballantyne, 2004; Jaworski & Kohli, 2006) emphasize that open dialogue between individuals and groups within the value network encourage knowledge sharing and mutual understanding. It provides an opportunity for clients to interject their view of value into the value creation process and helps organizations understand the emotional, social, and cultural contexts of clients' experiences. The initiation of Dialogue during co-creation requires a forum with clear rules of engagement leading to an orderly, productive interaction within emerging thematic communities.

2.2.2 Access

As the shift from the G-D Logic, focus on value as embedded in the product and obtainable through ownership, move toward an economy where value is found in using the product, access to (rather than ownership of) desirable experiences is becoming more important (Prahalad et al., 2004, p. 25). To facilitate such access often begins with giving the customer the right information and tools (ibid.), or in my interpretation providing them access to the necessary operant resources. The focus on *Access* challenges the notions of openness and ownership (Prahalad et al., 2006, p. 11). Providing customer access to resources, information, tools at multiple points across the value network provides organizations with innovative ideas about new products and services.

2.2.3 Risk Assessment

Risk is the probability of harm to the consumer (Prahalad et al., 2004, p. 27). Through Dialogue customers are able to ask questions to firms, which in turn can help creating a more trusting relationship (ibid). As customers become co-creators of value, they become more vulnerable to *Risk* and demand more information about the potential risks associated with the design, manufacturing, delivery and consumption of particular products and services. Proactive risk communication and management offers companies with new opportunities for competitive differentiation.

2.2.4 Transparency

The former information asymmetry between customers and companies is disappearing and transparency is increasingly desirable, and necessary to create trust between institutions, groups and individuals (Prahalad et al., 2004, p. 32). *Transparency* builds trust between both organizations, groups and individuals and it enables a creative dialogue in which trust emerges (Ballantyne, 2004; Romero et al., 2009). When organizations make vital information available to consumers, they hand over part of the control of the value creation process. Empowering customers with such control becomes a key component of companies' customer relationship management and differentiation strategies.

These building blocks are linked together in the sense that one can facilitate another, e.g. transparency can facilitate a collaborative dialogue (Prahalad et al., 2004, p. 31). Marketing managers should combine them in order to better engage customers as co-producers. Through such combinations, new and important capabilities arise in the companies. *Access and transparency* for instance enhances the consumer's ability to make informed choices. *Dialogue and risk assessment* enhances the ability to debate and co-develop public and private policy choices. *Access and dialogue due* enhances the ability to develop and maintain thematic communities. *Transparency and risk assessment* enhances the ability to co-develop trust (Tanev et al., 2011).

*2.3 Social Undermining and Co-Creation*

Socially undermining behavior is important within organizations (as a symptom of distress) as it can lead to discord among employees and also between employees and employers and thereby influence organizational morale and exert a negative effect on productivity and wellbeing (Strongman, 2013). Duffy (2002) indicated that higher levels of supervisor and coworker undermining are associated with more negative individual and work-related outcomes.

Although research has begun to underscore the impact of social undermining on individual and organizational well-being, several critical questions have yet to be examined into how and why social undermining reduce interactions and internal co-creations in organizations.

Social undermining in the workplace is intended to hinder goals of maintaining relationships. Because social undermining have powerful negative effect on interpersonal interactions. Individuals from the various functions need to interact in order to exchange information that enables co-creation.

According to Yi and Gong (2012) one type of co-creation behaviors is personal interaction, which are necessary for successful co-creation and includes interactional aspects such as courtesy, friendliness, and respect. Furthermore another aspect of co-creation behavior is helping. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2007) also argue that customers might extend empathy to other customers through helping behaviors. We propose that when existed these aspects, can reduce social undermining. Based on the conceptual model, social undermining and co-creation are expected to be related (Figure 2).
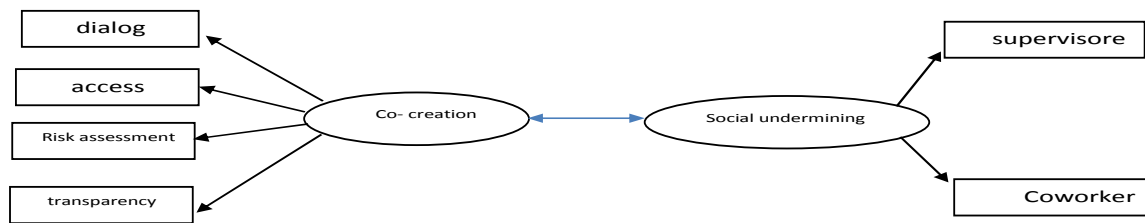
Figure 2. Conceptual model

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis l. There is relationship between supervisor social undermining and co-creation (dialogue, access, risk assessment, transparency)

Hypothesis 2. There is relationship between co- worker social undermining and co-creation (dialogue, access, risk assessment, transparency).

Hypothesis 3. There is a difference among faculty members' views in social undermining with regard to gender.

Hypothesis 4. There is a difference among faculty members' views in co-creation with regard gender.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Sample

The method of this study is descriptive and correlational. The statistical sample of this study was university faculty members in Iran. Faculty members entails high levels of social interaction in a setting that creates a great potential for forming both strong social bonds (for example co-creation) and negative relationships and hence makes a very suitable context for examining the dynamics of social undermining. In terms of research methodology, this study was a survey and field method was used in data gathering. The method of sampling was stratified random sampling proportional to the size. Based on Morgan table, sample size was estimated 385 participants. Of the total sample, 235 responded (61%). Of the total sample 180 were male and 50 were female.

### 3.2 Instruments

Social undermining was measured using a 26-item questionnaire developed and validated by Duffy et al. (2002). This scale included 13 items on coworker undermining and 13 items for supervisor undermining.

Subjects were asked to rate how frequently they had encountered each undermining behavior from their supervisor and their closest coworker recently. The participants answered the items questionnaire with response options from 1 = *never* to 9= *all the time*.

The reliability of the questionnaire in Duffy's research was .92 for the supervisor scale and .90 for the coworker scale. In this research reliability was .95 for supervisor scale and .93 for the coworker scale.

Co-creation development and assessment of the dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency scales resulted from a multiple-step and iterative process. Since measures of co-creation in organizational behavior and internal relationship in organization were not available, an initial list of co-creation was drawn from related resource that included aspects consistent with the co-creation. Then most of items modifications and adaptations were made in several instances to yield relevant dimensions of co-creation. From this item, some of faculty members identified and selected items that were consistent with the constitutive definition of co-creation and modified them accordingly.

We included all 45 items in the questionnaire, but after identify and modify by expert faculties, 31 items emerged from these. The participants answered the item questions with response options from 1 = *never* to 9= *all the time*. The reliability of co-creation questionnaire was 0.96.

## 4. Findings

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, alphas coefficients, and correlations of the measured variables. The zero-order correlations provide preliminary support for our hypotheses. Supervisor undermining and transparency were significantly and negatively correlated *(r* = -.44. p <.01), and the coworker undermining and transparency were significantly correlated *(r* = -.57. p <.01) (see Table 1). Prior to testing our structural model,

we examined the measurement model. As shown in Table 2, and in figure 3, the measurement model provides a good fit of the data.

Table 1. The means, standard deviations, and correlations

|  | Mean | Standard deviations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dialogue | 4.27 | 1.66 | (0.96) | | | | | |
| Access | 4.52 | 1.66 | 0.88* | (0.93) | | | | |
| Risk assessment | 5.07 | 1.59 | 0.82** | 0.81** | (0.90) | | | |
| Transparency | 4.85 | 1.63 | 0.70** | 0.67** | 0.79** | (0.91) | | |
| Coworker undermining | 3.94 | 1.83 | -0.44** | -0.41** | -0.53** | -0.57** | (0.96) | |
| Supervisor undermining | 3.07 | 1.69 | -0.24** | -0.19** | -0.34** | -0.44** | 0.80** | (0.97) |

*Note*. n = 235; * p <.05; ** p <.01.

Table 2. Model fit statistics

| $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2$/df | AIC | TLI | RMSEA | CFI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8.669 | 5 | 0.7331 | 52.669 | 0.993 | 0.440 | 0.989 |

*Note*. TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; CFI = comparative fit index.
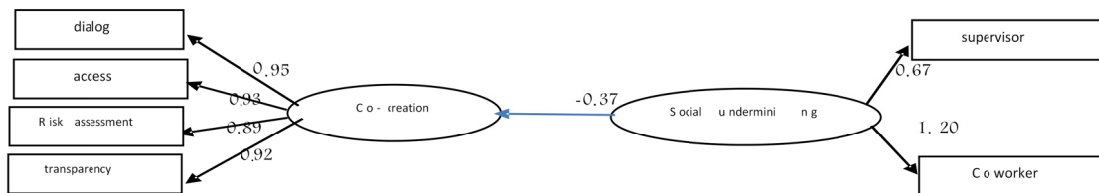


Figure 3. Structural model

Given the acceptable fit of our measurement model, we next assessed the hypothesized structural model. In addition to the paths depicted in Figure 4, all exogenous variables were allowed to correlate. According hypothesized model and variables bilateral relationships, we examined another model (see Figure 4). In second model, all indices are in the acceptable range and the model has a good fit. The main factor ($\chi^2$/df) is reduced to 0.989. AIC and BIC has decreased to compared to the first model. These results indicate that second model has better fit than first model (see Table 3).
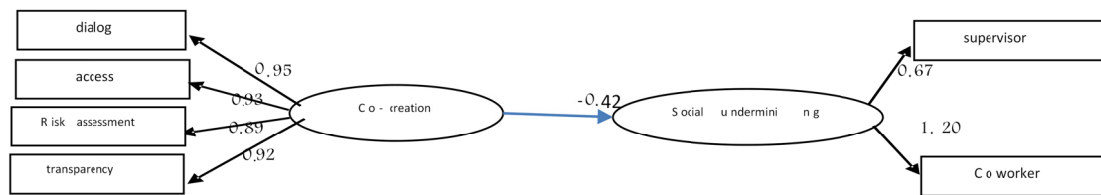
Figure 4. Structural model

Table 3. Model fit statistics

| $\chi^2$ | df | $\chi^2$/df | AIC | TLI | RMSEA | CFI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.931 | 5 | 0.989 | 49.931 | 0.1 | 0.026 | 0.1 |

*Note*. TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; CFI = comparative fit index.

To answer third and fourth hypotheses. The mean scores on the subscales were compered. The significance level for dialogue is less than 0.05. So there is difference between men and women grades in dialogue. Dialogue is higher among men than women (see Table 4).

Table 4. Results for t test about gender variable

|  |  |  | Levin test | | T test | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Group | Group | F test | Significant level | T test | Significant level |
| Dialogue | Women | 3.85 | 2.16 | 0.14 | -2.16 | 0.032 |
|  | Men | 4.39 | | | | |
| Access | Women | 4.26 | 3.57 | 0.06 | -1.326 | 0.186 |
|  | Men | 4.60 | | | | |
| Risk assessment | Women | 4.89 | 0.002 | 0.969 | -0.934 | 0.351 |
|  | Men | 5.12 | | | | |
| Transparency | Women | 4.93 | 1.668 | 0.198 | 0.402 | 0.688 |
|  | Men | 4.83 | | | | |
| Co-worker undermining | Women | 4.18 | 9.735 | 0.002 | 1.171 | 0.244 |
|  | Men | 3.87 | | | | |
| Supervisor undermining | Women | 3.29 | 0.948 | 0.331 | 1.122 | 0.263 |
|  | Men | 3.0 | | | | |

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

A major goal of this study was to examine the relationship between social undermining and co-creation among faculty members. Although organizational researchers have devoted considerable attention to social support in the workplace, the negative side of social interactions has been virtually ignored. In present study, social undermining behaviors in the workplace as perceived by the target population, was analyzed.

This study represents a point of departure in developing and investigating the construct and relationships between negative and positive organizational behaviors. To the extent that undermining behaviors are perceived as a violation of the relational contract, serious individual and organizational consequences may develop (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Research indicates that contract violations decrease dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency among members, and reduce deep interactions.

Often have been discussed organizational and structural barriers to relationships and co-creation, but has been neglected behavioral barriers. Social undermining is a behavioral factor of personal relationships, which are also the significant determinants of what occurs in any organization, including how the organization functions, and how people interrelate, communicate and perform tasks (Duffy et al., 2002). The implications of social undermining are many and various—from damage to the reputation of the persons, to organizational culture and wellbeing. The diagnosis of socially undermining behaviors can promote healthy workplace relationships, increase cooperation and trust, and prevent conflict escalation; however, this is often hard to achieve (Crossley, 2009). It is a responsible and perceptive organization that can respond to processes of social undermining, either by behavioral corrections or by interventions in organizational culture.

The 'hidden costs' of social undermining on an organization are measured in the damage to organizational culture and to performance. Socially undermining behavior is demotivating; hence it affects an organization's overall productivity as well as employees' wellbeing. The effects of social undermining in an organization may also be on a continuum between weak or strong influences, affecting both morale and organizational culture. For employees, the tendencies of social undermining to weaken confidence and support, or even may be subtle and its negative effects on morale in the workplace not really obvious or hidden.

The results of this study illustrate that if individuals engage in undermining behaviors, co-creation becomes weaker. According to researches undermining behaviors can reduce an employee's sense of worthy and may influence the positive or negative qualities of relationships. When negative, this can lead to a sense of helplessness. This impacts negatively on interactive and co-creation on the organizations.

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