

Why didn't you tell me the truth? “Report Only Good News” – exploring factors of biased reporting in the workplace

為什麼不告訴我真相? 「報喜不報憂」—探討職場中的不客觀報告

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Abstract: In many organizations, employees only report good news to their supervisors and fail to highlight potential problems or concerns, in order to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships and avoid discomfort in communication. We explored this topic using two studies. Study 1 used a qualitative approach to explore constructs of employee silence and voice. Three concepts emerged from our analysis, including the dimensions of selective expression, downplaying, and ostensible expression. These concepts are significant as they form the basis of our scale development in Study 2. Based on

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these concepts, we developed a nine-item scale, which was validated using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The practical and theoretical implications of our results are discussed.

Keywords: Employee voice behavior, report only good news, qualitative approach, scale development.

摘要：許多組織中的員工為了維持和諧的人際關係並避免溝通中的尷尬，往往只向上司報告好消息，而忽略潛在的問題或擔憂。本研究藉由兩項研究來探討這個議題。研究一使用質性方法來探討員工沉默噤聲與建言的相關概念；透過分析揭示了三個概念，包括選擇性表達、淡化處理和表面化表達。基於這些概念，在研究二中開發了一個九項量表，並通過探索性因素分析和驗證性因素分析對其進行了驗證。並討論了研究結果的實踐意涵和理論意涵。

關鍵詞：員工建言行為、報喜不報憂、質化研究、量表發展

1. Introduction

Understanding the nuances of workplace communication is essential for fostering effective organizational dynamics. Among these communication behaviors, "biased reporting" has garnered increasing attention due to its profound implications for organizational decision-making and culture. Biased reporting refers to the selective presentation of information, where employees emphasize positive aspects of their performance or the workplace while downplaying or omitting negative elements. This behavior can distort organizational realities, hinder problem identification, and contribute to ineffective decision-making processes, thereby undermining organizational performance (Detert and Edmondson, 2011; Zhao *et al.*, 2023).

The importance of studying biased reporting stems from its unique role in shaping the accuracy and integrity of organizational communication. While related concepts such as voice (Morrison, 2014), silence (Pinder and Harlos, 2001), and

impression management (Bolino *et al.*, 2016) have been extensively explored, biased reporting remains under-theorized. Voice involves the proactive expression of ideas or concerns, silence often reflects fear or disengagement (Milliken *et al.*, 2003), and impression management encompasses broader efforts to influence perceptions (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). However, biased reporting specifically involves the intentional manipulation of information presented to authority figures, making it distinct in both form and intent. This theoretical gap necessitates a deeper investigation to fully understand the factors driving biased reporting and its consequences (Ashford *et al.*, 1998; Wang and Ng, 2022).

Theoretical frameworks like the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory provide valuable insights into why employees engage in biased reporting. According to COR theory, individuals strive to protect their valued resources, such as self-esteem and job security, by adopting behaviors that minimize perceived threats (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Biased reporting can be seen as a strategic coping mechanism to safeguard these resources, particularly in environments where transparency may pose risks to an employee's reputation or career (Edmondson, 1999). This highlights the dual role of biased reporting in organizational dynamics: it not only serves as a symptom, reflecting deeper systemic issues such as lack of trust (Mayer *et al.*, 1995) or fear of repercussions (Kish-Gephart *et al.*, 2009), but also acts as a contributing factor that can further amplify these challenges. By distorting the flow of accurate information, biased reporting can perpetuate a cycle of mistrust, hinder effective decision-making, and exacerbate existing organizational problems (Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991).

Despite its significance, the phenomenon of biased reporting is insufficiently addressed in existing literature, leaving a critical theoretical void. Understanding the motives, contextual factors, and outcomes associated with biased reporting is essential for developing comprehensive models of workplace communication. For instance, while impression management focuses broadly on influencing perceptions (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1995), biased reporting is narrowly centered on the selective conveyance of information, often to create a favorable narrative. This distinction has implications for how organizations address communication

behaviors, as well as the development of interventions to promote transparency and trust (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Kim, 2020).

Our research aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the following questions:

1. What are the key components of biased reporting?
2. How does biased reporting differ from related concepts like voice, silence, and impression management?
3. What are the practical implications of biased reporting for organizational effectiveness and culture?

In the present study, we conducted two complementary investigations to explore these questions. Study 1 employed qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the underlying motives and contextual influences of biased reporting, while Study 2 developed and validated measurement tools to assess its dimensions. Together, these studies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of biased reporting and its role in workplace dynamics, offering both theoretical advancements and practical recommendations for organizational improvement.

By examining biased reporting as a distinct communication behavior, this research highlights its critical impact on organizational transparency and decision-making. Our findings aim to equip organizations with strategies to mitigate biased reporting, foster an open communication culture, and enhance overall workplace effectiveness.

2. Literature review

In organizational psychology, biased reporting has garnered considerable attention, particularly regarding how employees navigate their relationships with superiors. This behavior, often characterized by the selective presentation of information—specifically, "reporting only the good news but omitting the bad"—creates a nuanced interplay between personal ambition and organizational integrity (Cheng *et al.*, 2021). Understanding this construct more comprehensively is crucial, especially in Chinese workplaces, where hierarchical structures and cultural norms significantly influence communication dynamics.

Biased reporting refers to the tendency of individuals to highlight favorable

outcomes while disregarding failures or negative information. This phenomenon is not merely an individual choice but is often shaped by the organizational culture and the expectations set by leadership (Edmondson, 2019). Research indicates that environments where positive reporting is emphasized may cultivate a climate of fear and defensiveness, hindering honest communication and innovation (Baumeister *et al.*, 2003; Edmondson, 1999). In contexts where positive reporting is emphasized, employees often engage in strategic selection of information to mitigate perceived risks and avoid the consequences of negative feedback (Mitchell *et al.*, 2018). This behavior reflects not only risk-avoidance strategies but also a self-protective instinct driven by hierarchical pressures within organizations (Davidson, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, the emphasis on face-saving and relational harmony in traditional Chinese culture further promotes employees' strategic manipulation of information, often highlighting strengths while downplaying weaknesses in reporting (Hofstede, 2001; Hsieh and Huang, 2018). Such behavior reflects deep-rooted cultural influences and demonstrates the role of organizational structures in shaping employees' behavioral patterns. Traditional Chinese values such as collectivism, respect for authority, and maintaining harmony can lead to a tendency among employees to engage in biased reporting as a means of aligning with expectations and preserving social cohesion (Hofstede, 2001). Cheng *et al.* (2021) provide an insightful exploration of this behavior, emphasizing that employees may consciously choose to omit negative news to foster a more favorable impression in the eyes of their superiors. This aligns with the broader concept of "saying nothing but good news," which positions biased reporting as a strategic maneuver rather than an ethical lapse.

In a study examining the behavior of Chinese employees, Liu *et al.* (2019) found that individuals often prioritize the presentation of good news, even at the expense of transparency. They noted that this practice might stem from a fear of repercussions associated with negative feedback, underscoring how cultural norms can exacerbate the inclination toward biased reporting. This phenomenon aligns with findings that point towards a hierarchical organizational climate where

dissenting voices are discouraged, limiting the scope for genuine dialogue (Li *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, the inclination to focus solely on favorable outcomes is not without consequences. Organizations that foster an environment of biased reporting may inadvertently cultivate an atmosphere where innovation is stifled, as employees feel pressured to conform to expectations of positivity (Edmondson, 1999). This is particularly critical in rapidly changing industries where flexibility and adaptability are paramount. Research by Zhang *et al.* (2022) has illustrated that teams subjected to biased reporting are less likely to engage in iterative processes for improvement, ultimately impacting the organization's long-term effectiveness.

Significantly, the relationship between biased reporting and organizational culture cannot be overstated. A culture that rewards employees for favorable reporting can create systemic issues, such as a lack of accountability and integrity. For example, in a study of Chinese manufacturing firms, Zhou *et al.* (2019) found that the discouragement of harmful reporting practices led to severe operational inefficiencies and reduced overall morale among employees. Their results highlight the need for organizations to balance positive reporting with constructive feedback mechanisms to promote a healthy organizational climate.

Overview, biased reporting represents a complex interaction of individual motives and cultural influences within organizational settings. It serves as a protective mechanism for employees navigating hierarchical complexities while compromising organizational communication's integrity. For organizations to thrive, they must encourage transparency and foster a culture that values honesty and constructive critique, allowing for an atmosphere where innovation, collaboration, and accountability can flourish.

2.1 The nature of biased reporting

Biased reporting encompasses a complex array of communicative behaviors that predominantly favor specific outcomes while diminishing alternative outcomes' likelihood. This behavior can be seen as a response to high-pressure

organizational environments, especially when employees seek to protect their interests or reduce stakeholder dissatisfaction (Long, 2021; Zvi and Elaad, 2018). Specifically, employees may selectively emphasize favorable information during resource applications or performance evaluations to achieve their goals while avoiding potential criticism or penalties. This phenomenon can be categorized into two primary behaviors: promotive behaviors, which advocate for favorable results, and defensive behaviors, which inhibit the potential for less desirable outcomes. The implications of biased reporting extend beyond mere information dissemination; they reflect underlying psychological motivations and organizational dynamics.

Notably, behaviors such as biased reporting, toadying, and engaging in pleasantries necessitate a nuanced risk assessment (Davidson *et al.*, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2019). These studies suggest that individuals often navigate complex social landscapes in which the provision of information is strategically aligned with personal or organizational interests. Empirical research conducted by Mitchell *et al.* (2018) lends support to the idea that biased reporting functions as a risk aversion strategy, intrinsically linked to self-protective instincts in high-stakes environments. In similar contexts, Hsieh and Huang (2018) assert that toadying and pleasantries are strategically employed to cultivate trust among supervisors, which can yield immediate advantages for the individual, such as career advancement and favorable performance evaluations.

The phenomenon of biased reporting can be viewed through the lens of intentionality, where it is posited that the roots of such behavior may lie in a deliberate intention to mislead others. This leads to an attempt to persuade stakeholders to accept specific messages or beliefs (Zvi and Elaad, 2018). However, biased reporting is more likely driven by motives to safeguard personal interests or mitigate stakeholder dissatisfaction. This is particularly salient in contexts where employees advocate for increased resources from management (Long, 2021). Such advocacy often necessitates a delicate negotiation of perception and reality, wherein employees may prioritize presenting information that aligns with their self-interest or aspirations.

Furthermore, exploring the broader implications of biased reporting on organizational culture and decision-making processes is essential. The prevalence of biased information can lead to systematic distortions in organizational knowledge, affecting the efficacy and accuracy of strategic decisions. In environments characterized by high levels of competition or uncertainty, the tendency to engage in biased reporting may further entrench a culture of mistrust among employees, complicating collaboration and innovation.

Impression management and defensive voice behavior constitute strategic mechanisms employees utilize when confronted with perceived threats to their personal or professional interests (Peck and Hogue, 2018). These behaviors are not merely reactive; they are deeply rooted in the underlying psychological mechanisms that guide individuals' responses to organizational environments characterized by ambiguity, risk, and potential conflict.

The present investigation operates on the premise that the motivations and intentions informing biased reporting are fundamentally distinct from those associated with proactive engagement in impression management and voice behavior. Biased reporting is often employed to mitigate risk aversion and navigate uncertainty within an organizational context (Li *et al.*, 2020; Zhou *et al.*, 2018). This behavior can be understood as self-preservation, where individuals selectively present information to safeguard their interests, alter perceptions, or deflect potential criticism.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the landscape of employee behavior is complex and multifaceted. It remains plausible that individuals may engage in self-protective mechanisms through biased reporting while simultaneously participating in impression management and adopting voice behavior. In this dual engagement, employees might utilize biased reporting to navigate immediate threats and create a favorable self-image, thereby influencing how others perceive them within the organization.

These actions can significantly affect organizational dynamics, including communication effectiveness, trust among team members, and overall organizational culture. By understanding the interplay between biased reporting,

impression management, and voice behavior, organizations can better navigate the complexities of employee interactions and foster environments that encourage open, honest communication while managing the innate human tendencies toward self-preservation. Such insights could lead to developing interventions to promote transparency and authenticity, enhancing individual and organizational outcomes. Thus, further exploration of these dynamics is warranted to elucidate the nuanced relationships among these behaviors and their impacts on workplace culture and performance.

2.2 Voice behavior versus biased reporting

Voice behavior is a concept that encompasses the voluntary expression of constructive opinions, suggestions, and concerns by employees within an organizational context. This phenomenon has been characterized as a form of promotive behavior, where individuals actively contribute to the discourse aimed at fostering improvement and facilitating transformation within their teams and organizations (Detert and Burris, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2020). By articulating their perspectives and recommendations, employees engage in a process that is not merely individualistic but rather rooted in a collective goal of enhancing organizational effectiveness.

While voice behavior is generally associated with constructive contributions, biased reporting represents a defensive mechanism shaped by perceived risks and organizational culture.(Botero and Van Dyne, 2009; Edmondson, 1999). Such behaviors are often associated with perceived stress and the influence of power dynamics within organizations, leading employees to exercise greater caution or ignore critical issues to reduce personal or organizational risks. Employees who voice their concerns are typically driven by a desire to contribute positively to their organization and to support their colleagues with the underlying belief that such actions will yield beneficial outcomes for the collective (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2003). Most scholars regard voicing suggestions as a form of civic advocacy, which can be categorically beneficial to an organization when it promotes a culture of openness and continuous improvement (Gao *et al.*, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2013;

Shepherd *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, Chen *et al.* (2019) highlight that in collectivist cultures, biased reporting may align with the principle of "preserving harmony," wherein selective communication supports group cohesion rather than individual interests.

Voice behavior within organizational contexts is a complex phenomenon influenced by a multitude of factors, not the least of which is self-interest among employees. As Morrison (2011) posits, employees are inclined to exhibit various manifestations of voice behavior depending on the situational context they encounter at work. This suggests that voice behavior functions as a strategic declaration tool, adapting to the dynamics of the environment in which it occurs.

Botero and Van Dyne (2009) expand on this concept by delineating the types of voice behavior into three distinct categories: prosocial, defensive, and acquiescent. The relevance of defensive voice behavior is particularly pronounced in discussions of self-protective measures. Defensive voice emerges when employees perceive a vulnerability or threat within their work environment; thus, their expressions—whether suggestions or critiques—are predominantly driven by self-defense mechanisms (Botero and Van Dyne, 2009). This aligns with Schlenker and Weigold's (1989) assertion that self-protection entails reducing personal accountability and attributing mistakes to external circumstances. In this light, employees may resort to various tactics, such as excuses, misdirection, or outright denials, as a means to deflect blame and mitigate potential repercussions (Ryan and Oestreich, 1991).

Ryan and Oestreich (1991) further elaborate on the implications of defensive voice behavior by highlighting how the emotional landscape—particularly feelings of threat—can lead to biased reporting. Such reporting can be seen as an implicit strategy to safeguard one's standing within the organization and to avoid the negative ramifications of candid feedback. This behavior aligns with Leary and Kowalski's (1990) assertion that self-motivated behavior, such as the selective reporting of positive outcomes, serves to foster a favorable perception in the eyes of supervisors.

Moreover, it is essential to consider the contextual influences that precipitate

defensive voice behavior. For instance, organizational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping how employees express their voices. Cultures that discourage open communication often prompt employees to engage in defensive strategies out of fear of potential retaliation or reprimand (Edmondson, 1999). Conversely, an environment that promotes psychological safety can encourage constructive voice behavior, allowing employees to convey concerns or suggestions without fear of negative consequences (Schein, 2010).

The adoption of voice as a strategic behavior among employees is significantly influenced by a combination of individual work performance and mental state. Voice behavior, defined as the intentional expression of ideas, suggestions, or concerns about work-related issues, is contingent on various contextual factors. For instance, Janssen and Gao (2015) highlight that an individual's status within a group is critical in shaping the dynamics between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior. Specifically, employees who perceive themselves as higher status may feel more empowered to speak up. In contrast, those in lower status positions may withhold their input due to concerns about potential repercussions.

Furthermore, employees' influence within their group context can also affect the outcomes of voice behavior. Research by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) and Venkataramani and Tangirala (2010) indicates that effective voice behavior positively correlates with work network centrality and the propensity for supervisors to solicit opinions. Employees who occupy central positions within their work network may exhibit greater confidence in voicing their thoughts, leading to enhanced engagement and better organizational outcomes.

From a psychological perspective, psychological safety is critical in understanding why some employees engage in voice behavior while others do not. Engemann and Scott (2020) argue that employees are more inclined to express their opinions when they perceive their contributions will not jeopardize their personal standing or job security. The trust between employees and supervisors significantly influences this perception (Liu *et al.*, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2017). When employees perceive their supervisors as supportive and open to feedback, they are

likelier to partake in constructive voice behavior, creating a positive feedback loop that promotes an open communication culture.

In addition to psychological factors, social exchange mechanisms play a crucial role in shaping employee behavior. According to Zhang *et al.* (2015), employees with a strong emotional attachment to their organization, a low inclination to leave their job, and a positive leader-member exchange are more likely to engage in biased reporting. This tendency may stem from employees' desire to protect the organization's interests or enhance their relationship with supervisors, thus indicating that personal and professional ties significantly influence the nature of voice behavior in the workplace.

In contrast, biased reporting represents a distinct phenomenon characterized by the intentional manipulation or distortion of information (Vera and Crossan, 2004). This deliberate act is often motivated by the desire to gain supervisors' favor or advance personal agendas rather than to catalyze meaningful organizational change. Biased reporting may serve several purposes, such as securing support for specific initiatives, protecting interests, or improving interpersonal relationships. It can also respond strategically to high-risk work environments to minimize potential blame or reputational damage (Schlenker and Weigold, 1989). This type of communication can be detrimental, as it undermines trust and transparency within the organization and can lead to misinformed decision-making by leadership (Arnaud and Pleau, 2016).

The fundamental distinction between voice behavior and biased reporting lies in their intentions and outcomes. While voice behavior promotes organizational improvement, biased reporting distracts from genuine issues, often reinforcing existing power dynamics and perpetuating organizational inefficiencies (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Understanding these differences is crucial for leaders and organizations seeking to cultivate an environment that encourages constructive feedback and authentic communication, enhancing operational performance and employee engagement (Brenner, 2015).

2.3 Impression management behaviors versus biased reporting

Biased reporting can be conceptualized as a manifestation of impression management, wherein individuals engage in self-enhancing behaviors to craft and uphold favorable perceptions within the workplace context (Zhu *et al.*, 2022). Employees often resort to strategies such as self-promotion, where they actively assert their competencies and highlight their contributions to their supervisors, thereby signaling their value to the organization. Such behaviors may include providing evidence of their accomplishments through presentations, reports, or informal discussions, aligning with the stipulations of impression management theory (Bolino *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to self-promotion, employees often employ ingratiation techniques to enhance their standing. This includes tactics such as attributing successes to the mentorship or support of supervisors and publicly praising higher management's leadership qualities and achievements. Such actions foster a positive relationship and secure desired evaluations, ultimately influencing career advancement opportunities (Gully *et al.*, 2013). In Confucian cultures, biased reporting may not always signify deceit but can reflect a commitment to the ethical principle of "concealing flaws and highlighting virtues" (Ho *et al.*, 2017). This perspective suggests that biased reporting, when framed as an act of preserving harmony and protecting relational bonds, might serve a functional role in maintaining organizational stability.

This paper posits that while biased reporting and impression management share commonalities in their execution, they diverge significantly in their underlying motives. The proclivity for biased reporting may be driven by the aspiration to impress supervisors and the underlying fear of negative repercussions associated with poor performance. Employees may be inclined to report only favorable outcomes as a protective mechanism to avoid censure and mitigate the scrutiny associated with suboptimal work results. This divergent motivational framework aligns with the notion that individuals often strive to divert attention away from potentially problematic issues, thereby allowing them to maintain a semblance of competence and reliability in the eyes of management (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, the implications of biased reporting extend beyond individual motivations and perceptions; they can ultimately affect organizational culture and performance. While biased reporting may create challenges in organizational transparency, it also underscores the complexity of balancing individual motivations and collective goals, particularly in cultures where interpersonal harmony is highly valued. Consequently, organizations may need to establish more robust accountability mechanisms and cultivate an environment where honest discourse about challenges and failures is encouraged (Caza *et al.*, 2017).

In conclusion, while biased reporting may enhance a favorable perception of individuals within the workplace, it is imperative to recognize the nuanced motivations driving this behavior. Acknowledging the potential for self-serving interests and avoiding negative evaluations allows for a more comprehensive understanding of employee reporting behavior in organizational settings.

Study 1: Concept development of biased reporting by employees

Biased reporting, particularly in workplace settings, has emerged as a prevalent issue among Chinese employees, raising essential questions about the interpretations and implications of such behavior. This multifaceted phenomenon can significantly affect workplace dynamics, employee morale, and organizational culture. Employees' reactions to biased reporting vary widely based on their experiences, cultural backgrounds, and professional contexts. Consequently, it is crucial to understand this issue from the employees' perspective, as their perceptions can offer valuable insights into the broader implications of biased reporting within organizations (Baker, 2016).

To explore this construct comprehensively, this study adopted a qualitative approach, emphasizing the collection of data derived from employees' experiences and emotions. Qualitative research methodologies, particularly in organizational studies, allow for a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena such as biased reporting, which quantitative methods may overlook (Hinkin, 1998). Through detailed interviews and open-ended survey questions, employees can provide nuanced accounts of how biased reporting manifests in their work environments and how it influences their perceptions of fairness, trust, and job

satisfaction.

Moreover, the cultural context in which these employees operate may further inform their responses. In collectivist cultures such as China, where relationships and group harmony are valued, biased reporting might lead to feelings of betrayal or disconnection among team members. This is consistent with research indicating that cultural values can significantly affect how employees interpret their workplace experiences (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995).

Understanding the nuanced interpretations of biased reporting from employees contributes to theoretical discussions of workplace dynamics and offers practical implications for management practices. Organizations can develop better communication and conflict resolution strategies when they recognize the subjective nature of employee experiences (Smith and Huber, 2018). Organizations can mitigate the adverse effects of biased reporting by fostering an environment that encourages open dialogue and values employee feedback.

3. Methodology

Taiwan serves as an exemplary context for this research due to its distinct capitalist, free-market economy, which predominantly features private, profit-oriented enterprises that are pivotal in driving economic advancement and employment opportunities. The work culture within Taiwan is significantly influenced by Confucianism, a philosophical framework characterized by four primary principles: the importance of hierarchy for stability and order, a long-term orientation, the promotion of social harmony, and the emphasis on virtuous behaviors (Lin and Ho, 2009). As noted by Lin and Ho (2009), the influence of Confucian values on managerial practices in Taiwan surpasses that found in other societies within the broader Confucian Asia cluster.

Consequently, Taiwan was selected as the research site to investigate the construct of biased reporting, particularly in its function as a strategy for career advancement. Career advancement must align with Confucian principles to be deemed acceptable in this cultural context. In a thriving free-market environment, social mobility primarily hinges on occupational success, actively motivating

employees to pursue career development opportunities. Notably, research by Lu *et al.* (2003) indicates that career development constitutes a significant source of stress for Taiwanese employees. Therefore, supervisors' recognition, encouragement, and support are critical to the experiences of Anese employees and managers (Lu *et al.*, 2000).

The sample selected in Taiwan is representative of the broader workforce dynamics influenced by these cultural and economic factors. The study aims to explore biased reporting from the employees' perspective by conducting qualitative interviews, allowing for a nuanced understanding of individual perceptions and lived experiences. Utilizing grounded theory to analyze the antecedents and consequences of biased reporting enables a comprehensive exploration of the connotative concepts that shape workplace behaviors and attitudes. This methodological approach ensures that the findings reflect Taiwan's unique socio-cultural context, offering valuable insights into the interplay between cultural values and career advancement strategies.

3.1 Participants

We began our participant selection process for this study by conducting in-depth interviews with five corporate executives enrolled in a part-time Executive MBA program at a university in Taiwan. This initial phase aimed to gain foundational insights into biased reporting. Building on these findings, we extended our research to include 21 executives from a separate EMBA program at another Taiwanese university.

The participants represented various sectors, including manufacturing, services, logistics, and electronics. Regarding demographics, 52.4% of the interviewees were women, reflecting a significant representation of female leaders in these industries. The executives varied in career stages: 42.9% held junior managerial positions, 38.1% were mid-level managers, and 19% were senior executives. On average, the participants had accumulated 13.1 years of professional experience, indicating a wealth of knowledge and insight into the corporate landscape.

We specifically targeted corporate executives as our participants because they

possess a unique dual perspective—as both producers and recipients of biased reporting—enabling them to recognize and articulate the detrimental effects of such practices. Participant recruitment was facilitated through program instructors, ensuring a relevant and engaged group of individuals for our study.

3.2 Materials and data collection

An interview guide was meticulously crafted, incorporating open-ended questions and general demographic inquiries. Before the commencement of the interviews, the purpose of the study was thoroughly articulated to the participants, and a comprehensive informed consent statement was prominently displayed on the first page of the outline. Each face-to-face interview, conducted by one of the authors, lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Participants were allowed to select both the time and location of the interview to enhance comfort and ensure confidentiality, thereby safeguarding their privacy throughout the research process.

The interviews were conducted in Chinese to accommodate the participants' preferred language and were subsequently recorded and transcribed by a dedicated research team member. The study addressed two fundamental questions concerning biased reporting:

1. In what ways do employees report predominantly positive news while concealing underlying issues?
2. Could you provide examples of instances where employees focused on reporting favorable information, neglecting to highlight potential concerns in the workplace?

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the recruitment process. Participants were approached through established networks to minimize the risk of coercion or undue influence. Additionally, measures were implemented to ensure that participation was entirely voluntary, with the ability to withdraw at any stage without repercussion. The confidentiality of participants was rigorously maintained, with identifying information anonymized in all published results to uphold ethical research standards and protect the rights of individuals involved.

3.3 Data analysis

The data collected through interviews were subjected to a systematic and rigorous analysis, following the four-step methodology proposed by Weber (1990): (1) transcription of audio recordings, (2) identification and confirmation of keywords, (3) classification and interpretation of keywords, and (4) verification of reliability. The coding process involved one of the authors (coder A) and two PhD students (coders B and C) specializing in organization and human resource management.

3.3.1 Classification and interpretation of keywords

To enhance the validity and reliability of the data analysis, this study incorporated several robust verification methods, including the member-checking process advocated by Creswell and Miller (2000) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). This method entails the interviewees reviewing the verbatim transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the data presented. Initially, the data were divided into 81 analysis units, but following member checking, five analysis units deemed doubtful were removed, leaving a total of 76 valid units. The number of analysis units generated from each interview varied between one and seven.

Subsequently, these 76 units underwent systematic coding, with a secondary classification conducted one week after the initial classification. Reliability was assessed through intra-rater reliability (classification consistency by the same coders across different time points) and inter-rater reliability (classification consistency between different coders). Intra-rater reliability scores were recorded at 90.79%, 86.84%, and 92.11%, indicating a strong level of consistency. Regarding inter-rater reliability, coders A and B classified 66 items into identical sub-categories, coders B and C agreed on 69 items, and coders A and C concurred on 68 items. This resulted in inter-rater reliability scores of 86.84%, 90.79%, and 89.47%, respectively, affirming the results' stability and robustness (Kassarjian, 1977; Ronan and Latham, 1974).

3.3.2 Content analysis

The analysis units, once established, were critically examined by the coders through repetitive readings to ascertain underlying themes within each unit. The identification of themes was conducted meticulously, leading to the development of three primary categories of biased reporting, encompassing nine secondary categories. To strengthen the representation of participants' perspectives, subsequent analyses concentrated on enhanced theme assessment and addressed potential overlap or redundancy among themes.

Furthermore, to ensure methodological rigor, steps were taken to align the definitions of constructs with their respective measurement items. Improvements in construct validity were emphasized through careful evaluation of the coherence between conceptual frameworks and measurement strategies. Finally, a theoretical justification for the selected criterion-related validity measures was provided to reinforce the integrity and applicability of the research findings.

4. Results

4.1 Results of study 1

Do employees see biased reporting as a good or a bad thing?

The interviewees saw biased reporting as a positive, negative, or neutral behavior.

Positive: *"It's a behavior to avoid trouble and to avoid causing distress to one's colleagues."* (U01)

Negative: *"It's a way to create noise to cover up mistakes."* (Q03)

Neutral: *"Everyone has the instinct to protect themselves. It is common practice to report only good news for the sake of self-protection. Many people choose to do that."* (C05)

4.1.1 Different analysis levels for biased reporting

Employees take on different roles when interacting with different parties. Employees interact with their supervisors, act as information providers to other

departments, or act as liaisons between their organization and external organizations. Thus, biased reporting can occur on an interpersonal level (including colleagues and direct supervisors) and individual-organizational level (including departments).

Interpersonal: *"Sometimes, biased reporting can protect reputations, saving face for one's self or colleagues and supervisors. Reputation is very important. Chinese people place great emphasis on reputation. Why make people feel embarrassed when it is not necessary?" (D03)*

Individual-organization: *"Biased reporting is about selectively speaking out. When the future situation is under control and the company can achieve its goals, withholding information to prevent trouble doesn't hurt." (I01)*

Organization-organization: *"In inter-organizational interactions, it's common for companies only to disclose the information that people want to hear and cover up unfavorable information and uncertainty." (C06)*

Biased reporting is a common communication pattern between employees and supervisors in organizations. Employees will articulate what and how they should present to their supervisors to be perceived as competent and making positive contributions to achieve career advancement.

Individual supervisor: *"Many employees only talk about things that will benefit their performance and never mention unfavorable things, to avoid unnecessary distress or bad feedback." (L01)*

4.1.2 Categories of biased reporting

As shown in Table 1, the interviewees discussed three main categories of biased reporting: selective *expression*, *downplaying*, and *surface acting*. The nine secondary categories were selective information sharing, procrastination tactics, white lies, eliciting positive comments, being careful, avoiding blame, beliefs of futility, saving face, and perfunctory responses. The most frequently mentioned

Table 1

Attributes of the nature of employees' "Report Only Good News" behavior

Main category	The original sentences in secondary category	Frequency
selective expression	(1) selective information sharing: purposefully disclose information that is beneficial to themselves.(B04, I01, C06-2, D05-2, J03, K03, D01, M02, O02, P03, E02, L01) ; avoid reporting information that is unfavorable to them (L02, P02, S02, E01, B04, Q03, F01)	18
	(2) procrastination tactics: delaying tactics and wait for the situation to improve before speaking out (A02, I02-2, G02, A01, E03-1, I02-5, L03)	7
	(3) white lies: a lie that is told in order to be polite or to stop someone from being upset by the truth (B07, E03-2, E06, D04-2, U01-2)	5
downplaying	(4) eliciting positive comments: the behavior of expecting to receive positive comments.(A07-1, C06-1, D02, H03, J04-2, L03, N03); sugarcoating information that is unfavorable to themselves(G04 、H01-2 、S01 、S03-1 、T03)	12
	(5) being careful: the ways of self-protection(C05, M03-1, N01, O03); the instinct of self-protection(E04, F02, Q02, J04-1); the mechanism of self-protection(G03, G01)	10
	(6) avoiding blame: avoiding criticism(B01, T01, U01-1); avoid responsibility(H01-1, T02) ;withholding unfavorable information (C01, M01, N02, O01, R01)	10
surface acting	(7) sense of futility (A04, B05, B06, D04-1, O03-2)	5
	(8) saving face (A05-2, D03, P01, C03)	4
	(9) perfunctory response (A03, A06, C04, I05, M04)	5

Notes: The code A01 is mean the first word stems from the interviewee A.

sub-category of biased reporting was selective information sharing, with 18 occurrences; the second most frequent was eliciting positive comments, with 12 occurrences; the third most frequent was being careful and avoiding blame, each with 10 occurrences.

Selective expression: Employees can purposefully disclose information that

is beneficial to them and selectively avoid reporting information that is unfavorable to them. This is sometimes motivated by the expectation that the problem will disappear; therefore, employees use delaying tactics and wait for the situation to improve before speaking out (i.e., procrastination tactics). Employees will also tell white lies to avoid hurting or embarrassing their colleagues and supervisors.

Selective information-sharing (disclosing): *"To state an issue strategically is not telling lies, but rather selectively disclosing information."* (B04).

Selective information-sharing (avoiding): *"Biased reporting allows employees to filter out things that put them in an unfavorable light."* (F01).

Procrastination tactics: *"Our concerns may be unfounded. It makes sense to evaluate the possibility and the risk before we decide whether to report our worries or not."* (I02-5)

White lies: *"Telling a white lie is sometimes the politest thing to do to prevent someone from getting upset."* (E06).

Downplaying: The interviewees commented that biased reporting is human nature and that it is natural to want to protect oneself in the workplace. When employees interact with their supervisors, they will inevitably talk more cautiously.

Self-protection: *"Biased reporting avoids trouble and is a way to protect yourself."* (O03)

Self-protection (instinct): *"Biased reporting is an instinctive self-protection behavior as well as a natural expression of humanity."* (E04)

Being careful: *"Everyone behaves cautiously in the workplace. It's important to be careful when communicating with supervisors. We always think before we speak."* (G01)

In addition, the interviewees perceived that employees would engage in biased reporting to elicit positive supervisor comments. They would thus sugarcoat information that is unfavorable to themselves.

Eliciting positive comments: *"It's critical to know how to downplay problems and to increase the chance of being seen as a good employee. This is*

where biased reporting is useful.” (J04-2).

Sugarcoating: *“Commonly, employees will report nothing but good news in business meetings, and many try to sugarcoat problems to prevent getting themselves into trouble.” (S03-1)*

The interviewees also suggested that employees avoid criticism and responsibility and tend to withhold unfavorable information.

Avoiding criticism: *“Biased reporting is a way of avoiding one’s job duties and avoiding blame from supervisors.” (B01)*

Avoiding responsibility: *“Biased reporting is like burying one’s head in the sand to avoid the responsibility that one should face.” (H01)*

Withholding: *“They don’t seek help when encountering difficulties because they don’t want to show their weaknesses.” (N02)*

Surface acting: To save face or avoid feeling useless during interactions with supervisors, employees can adopt a superficial and pointedly polite way of communication (i.e., perfunctory responses).

Sense of futility: *“When speaking out makes no difference, or the supervisor is not capable of solving the problems, you will not get any resources or assistance even if you voice concerns.” (B06)*

Saving face: *“Some people will choose to report only good news because everyone is happy if they only talk about good things, and they will feel favored. Thus, they will feel ashamed to speak about bad things.” (A05-2)*

Perfunctory response: *“In meetings, when there are some topics that an employee doesn’t want to talk about, they will give a superficial response.” (C04)*

4.2 Study 2: Construction of a scale for biased reporting

The primary objective of this study was to develop a psychometric scale designed to assess the propensity of employees to report favorable outcomes, commonly referred to as a "good news bias." This phenomenon can significantly affect organizational decision-making and communication, as overemphasizing

positive information may obscure potential issues and hinder comprehensive performance and risk assessments (Meyer, 2020).

We adhered to the two-phase scale development procedure articulated by Hinkin (1998) to achieve a robust scale. This process began with forming and categorizing measurement items in the first phase. The items were generated through a thorough review of relevant literature and expert interviews, ensuring that they comprehensively capture the construct of good news reporting (DeVellis, 2016).

We evaluated the scale's content validity, factorial structure, and internal consistency in the second phase. Specifically, we employed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the scale's dimensionality. By using two independent samples for EFA and CFA, we aimed to enhance the reliability of our findings. EFA was conducted on a preliminary sample to uncover the underlying factor structure without imposing preconceived constraints. This approach allows for a more flexible data exploration, helping to identify the dimensions that best represent the tendency for good news reporting. Subsequently, CFA was performed on a separate confirmation sample to verify the identified structure and assess model fit, thereby ensuring the robustness of our scale (Brown, 2015). Utilizing distinct samples for EFA and CFA mitigates the risk of overfitting the model to a single dataset. It strengthens the generalizability of the results, as Hall and Crooks (2019 suggested).

Through this dual-phase approach, we aimed to develop a methodologically sound tool for measuring good news reporting bias and contribute to the broader discourse on communication behaviors within organizational settings.

Phase 1: Development and categorization of measurement items

4.2.1 Expert validity

Based on the results of Study 1, we developed the measurement items and asked a panel of experts to confirm and categorize these items. Expert validity is ensured by asking varied experts in the field to judge the breadth and appropriateness of the content. Expert validity is part of content validity.

Interviews with experts allow for analyzing the breadth and appropriateness of designed content, representing a sociological approach to data collection (Bell and Braymen, 2012). According to Libakova and Sertakova (2015), senior managers can be regarded as practical experts, whereas researchers can be regarded as theoretical experts. We recruited five managers with more than 15 years of managerial experience and two doctoral students majoring in human resource management from a university in Taiwan. The experts were tasked with categorizing the 15 items according to the three dimensions identified in Study 1: selective expression (5 items), downplaying (6 items), and surface acting (4 items).

4.2.2 Item validity

Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) recommended categorizing measurement items to reflect the underlying conceptual dimensions. We assessed the categorization of the 15 items from a non-managerial perspective by recruiting 32 graduate students from another university in northern Taiwan. The students were tasked with assessing the degree to which the items represent their assigned dimensions. The students were also tasked with reassigning the items to two other dimensions and indicating the degree to which that item fit the proposed dimension(s). A weighted score of 3 points was awarded for a single answer. For multiple selections, a weighted score of 2 points was awarded for "1: most suitable" and 1 point for "2: second-most suitable". The average time to complete categorization was 25 min.

Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) suggested a threshold of 60% of the total response frequency weighting for each item as the critical criterion for rater reliability. Acceptable inter-rater reliability is a weighted response frequency exceeding 57.6 ($32 \times 3 \times 60\% = 57.6$). Overall, 10 out of the 15 items achieved inter-rater reliability of 66.67%, meaning that five were not validated and were therefore removed from the measurement scale. The 10 valid items were categorized as follows: selective expression (27%), downplaying (20%), and surface acting (20%).

Phase 2: Factorial structure, internal consistency, and validity of

measurement scale

In Phase 2, we examined the factorial structure of the scale using exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and criterion-related validity.

4.2.3 Samples and procedures

Two independent samples were collected: Sample A was used for exploratory factor analysis, and Sample B was used for confirmatory factor analysis and criterion-related validity analysis.

We selected 30 companies in the electronics, transportation, and warehousing industries through stratified random sampling for Sample A. These were drawn from a list of the top 1,000 companies in Taiwan. We mailed 10 questionnaires to each company and received 252 responses (response rate = 84%). Questionnaires with obvious response tendencies and excessive omissions were omitted, yielding 244 valid responses (usable rate = 81.33%). Among the 244 respondents, 43% were female, 50.2% were married, 11.6% had high school/vocational high school education, 60.2% had university/tertiary education, and 28.2% had postgraduate education. The average age was 35.95 years old. Each item was assessed using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Table 2 lists the dimensions and questionnaire items.

Through stratified random sampling, we selected 30 companies in the finance and insurance industries for Sample B. These were drawn from a list of the top 1,000 companies in Taiwan. To avoid common method variance, each company received 10 questionnaires comprising matched item pairs for subordinates and supervisors. The matching surveys were initially distributed to 300 dyads. Tendencies towards biased reporting were identified by having subordinates indicate the extent to which each statement described how they felt about their work using a 7-item scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). We also measured the job performance of subordinates using Chien and Han's (2008) 21-item scale: task performance (6 items; $\alpha=0.854$) and contextual performance (15 items; $\alpha=0.94$). We then had supervisors rate the work performance of subordinates using a 7-point scale again. Supervisors were asked to assess

Table 2

Questionnaire measuring employee tendencies to “Report Only Good News”

Dimension	Question number	Questionnaire
		“To what extent do you agree with the following statements in describing how you behave during the past 3 months when your supervisor inquired about your work progress?”
Selective expression	Q1	I usually adopt procrastination tactics to deal with a situation as it develops and look for improvement, rather than acting according to plans made earlier.
	Q2	I usually tell white lies to avoid hurting or embarrassing others.
	Q3	I usually avoid giving out disadvantageous information and only give out information that is beneficial to me.
Downplaying	Q10	I usually report the good news and postpone reporting the bad news; then I propose another solution.
	Q4	I usually sugarcoat information in order to receive positive comments.
	Q5	I usually emphasize my contribution(s) and avoid mentioning my failures to fully protect myself.
Surface acting	Q6	I usually withhold unfavorable information to avoid being blamed by my supervisor.
	Q7	I usually do not express my deep thoughts and personal opinions because I think speaking out will not make a difference.
	Q8	I usually make superficial promises to save face for others.
	Q9	I usually respond perfunctorily regarding any poor performance on my part.

Note: Q10 has a negative loading of 0.442 for Factor 1 (i.e., no convergent validity) and negative loadings of 0.356 and 0.373 for Factors 2 and 3 respectively (i.e., no discriminant validity). This item was therefore removed.

employees' work performance, encompassing task-related and contextual performance elements. This approach reflects real-world evaluation practices, where supervisors typically integrate various performance dimensions into a single assessment. Such practice is consistent with the validity of holistic performance evaluations supported by previous studies. We received 247 usable matching pairs (response rate = 82.3%). Sample B produced 232 valid matched responses, yielding a usable rate of 77.33%, which resulted in a Cronbach's α of

0.89. Among the subordinates in Sample B, 54.3% were female, 42.7% were married, 7.3% had high school/vocational high school education, 69.0% had university/tertiary education, and 23.3% had graduate degrees. The average age of subordinates was 35.1 years old. Among the supervisors, 47.4% were female, 54.3% were married, 2.6% had high school/vocational high school education, 54.3% had university/tertiary education, and 44.0% had graduate degrees. The average age of supervisors was 47.32 years old.

4.2.4 Exploratory factor analysis

SPSS 20 and LISREL 8.8 were used for exploratory and factor analysis. The stability of the factorial structure was assessed by subjecting Sample A to exploratory factor analysis after assessing the degree of suitability. Kaiser and Rice (1974) claimed that a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value exceeding 0.8 is acceptable. In the current study, we obtained a KMO value of $0.805 > 0.8$ and a p -value of $0.000 < 0.05$ using the Bartlett test. These results were both considered acceptable. Using the varimax method with principal component analysis and orthogonal rotation, we extracted three factors cumulatively explained 77.82% of the variance. We omitted one of the items due to a negative loading of 0.442 for Factor 1 (i.e., lack of convergent validity) and respective loadings of 0.356 and 0.373 for Factors 2 and 3 (i.e., lack of discriminant validity).

Exploratory factor analysis of the remaining nine questions confirmed the stability of the three-factor structure: Factor 1 (selective expression; 3 questions); Factor 2 (downplaying; 3 questions); and Factor 3 (surface acting; 3 questions). These three factors explained 81.89% of the variability in the sample.

The Cronbach's α values of the subscales were as follows: selective expression (0.93), downplaying (0.89), and surface acting (0.80). The reliability coefficient for the overall scale was 0.91. Table 3 lists the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

4.2.5 Confirmatory factor analysis

The nine remaining items were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis

Table 3
Results of the exploratory factor analysis on the content of the question of employees' "Report Only Good News" behavior

Question content	Mean	Standard Deviation	Selective expression	Downplaying	Surface acting	Cronbach's α	Overall Cronbach's α
Q1	5.66	1.107	.862	.231	.223	0.93	0.91
Q2	5.62	1.067	.842	.390	.227		
Q3	5.49	1.151	.823	.343	.259		
Q4	5.18	1.211	.237	.877	.174	0.89	
Q5	5.01	1.358	.264	.864	.142		
Q6	4.74	1.270	.285	.825	.108		
Q7	5.24	.977	.112	.085	.932	0.80	
Q8	5.41	.982	.533	.182	.644		
Q9	5.45	1.045	.451	.267	.623		

using Sample B, the results of which are summarized in Table 4. Construct reliability (CR) values were as follows: selective expression (0.82), downplaying (0.75), and surface acting (0.76). These values exceed 0.7, confirming the scale's internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The average variance extraction (AVE) values were as follows: selective expression (0.61), downplaying (0.50), and surface acting (0.52). These values exceed 0.5, confirming discriminant validity.

The CFA revealed good fit indices for the three-factor model (Model 1): $\chi^2 = 69.84$, $df = 24$, $\chi^2 / df = 2.91 < 3$, $CFI = 0.94 > 0.9$, $GFI = 0.91 > 0.9$, $RMSEA = 0.077 < 0.08$, and $SRMR = 0.04 < 0.05$. We also conducted CFA on two- and one-factor models. As shown in Table 5, the three-factor model significantly outperformed the other models in fitting the data.

4.2.6 Criterion-related validity analysis

We posited that subordinates engage in biased reporting to improve their supervisor's impressions of their task performance. We thus tested criterion-related validity by examining the work performance, task performance, and

Table 4
Construct reliability and average variance extraction of the scale regarding employees' "Report Only Good News" behavior

Dimension	Question number	Standardized factor loading	Observational error	CR	AVE
Selective expression	Q1	0.76	0.42	0.82	0.61
	Q2	0.81	0.36		
	Q3	0.77	0.41		
Downplaying	Q4	0.75	0.42	0.75	0.50
	Q5	0.62	0.50		
	Q6	0.67	0.47		
Surface acting	Q7	0.69	0.48	0.76	0.52
	Q8	0.80	0.42		
	Q9	0.63	0.52		

Table 5
Comparison of multiple models for confirmation of factor structure

	χ^2	df	χ^2 / df	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1 (Three- factor model: selective expression, downplaying and surface acting)	69.84	24	2.91	0.94	0.91	0.077	0.04
Model 2 (Two- factor model: combined selective expression and downplaying into one factor)	88.50	25	3.54	0.90	0.88	0.081	0.052
Model 3 (Two- factor model: combined selective expression and surface acting into one factor)	128.00	25	5.12	0.88	0.86	0.098	0.061
Model 4 (Two- factor model: combined downplaying and surface acting into one factor)	134.50	25	5.38	0.84	0.86	0.101	0.065
Model 5 (One- factor model: combined selective expression, downplaying and surface acting into one factor)	184.86	26	7.11	0.61	0.72	0.190	0.088

contextual performance of employees in Sample B.

Table 6 lists the mean of each variable, standard deviation, and correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients between biased reporting and performance

Table 6
Correlation analysis of mean, standard deviation, and criterion validity variables

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4
1. Biased reporting	3.91	1.10	(0.89)			
2. Task performance	5.36	0.88	-0.23**	(0.85)		
3. Contextual performance	5.37	0.84	0.35**	0.30**	(0.94)	
4. Work performance	5.37	0.72	0.23**	0.55**	0.95**	(0.92)

were as follows: task performance (-0.23, $p < 0.01$), contextual performance (0.35, $p < 0.01$), and overall work performance (0.23, $p < 0.01$). Thus, it appears that biased reporting negatively affects task performance. However, biased reporting is positively correlated with contextual performance. Finally, biased reporting is positively correlated with overall work performance.

The relationships between biased reporting and performance outcomes reveal its differential impact on task and contextual performance. Its negative correlation with task performance suggests that biased reporting may obscure critical task details, affecting efficiency and effectiveness. Conversely, its positive correlation with contextual performance indicates that biased reporting may help maintain harmony and social cohesion. These findings highlight the complexity of biased reporting and underscore the importance of considering contextual factors when interpreting its effects on organizational outcomes.

By incorporating the criterion-related validity analysis, this study further elucidates the practical implications of biased reporting on employee performance evaluations, providing insights for researchers and practitioners on how this behavior influences workplace dynamics.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

The exploration of biased reporting among employees highlights several critical dimensions that contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon. Our findings reveal that employees often engage in biased reporting as a mechanism

for self-protection, self-interest, and the maintenance of favorable impressions of themselves and their colleagues. This multifaceted nature of biased reporting underscores the intricate relationship between biased reporting and key constructs such as impression management and voice behavior. While these concepts are interrelated, it is imperative to recognize that they are distinct.

Our research extends the literature on impression management by elucidating that biased reporting functions as a mechanism beyond mere self-promotion (Goffman, 1959). By situating our findings within this theoretical framework, we propose that biased reporting serves as a nuanced behavior interwoven with broader organizational dynamics, meriting further investigation in diverse contexts. This perspective fills critical gaps in the existing literature on self-protection and self-benefit behaviors by demonstrating that such reporting strategies can evolve as adaptive mechanisms in specific contextual environments.

Furthermore, our study challenges the predominantly negative characterization of biased reporting as detrimental to organizational efficacy (Keller and Spink, 2020). We found that managers' perceptions of biased reporting are multifaceted; they may interpret this behavior as a strategic response to complex workplace environments. This aligns with the arguments presented by Bolino *et al.* (2016), who contend that employees engage in impression management to effectively navigate organizational hierarchies and social networks.

Additionally, our findings indicate that biased reporting manifests at multiple organizational levels, challenging the notion that such behavior is confined to individual interactions. We identified three major forms of biased reporting: selective expression, downplaying, and surface acting. Selective expression entails strategic omission of information to enhance one's image, while downplaying involves minimizing negative outcomes to maintain team morale. Surface acting, as a form of emotional regulation, refers to feigning positive emotions despite internal conflicts (Hülshager and Schewe, 2011). Recognizing these forms enhances our understanding of the context-dependent nature of biased reporting and its ramifications on team dynamics, as highlighted by Kahn (2018).

Through our analysis, we propose that biased reporting could be incorporated into discussions on organizational justice literature, bringing to light pressing questions regarding fairness and transparency in workplace communication. By understanding the diverse motivations behind biased reporting, organizations can develop strategies that address the underlying issues contributing to this behavior.

In terms of practical implications, we recommend that organizations cultivate environments where open and honest communication is encouraged. As highlighted by Edmondson (1999), psychological safety is instrumental in reducing biased reporting. Creating an environment where employees can openly express concerns without fear fosters trust and transparency, which is foundational to mitigating defensive communication behaviors. Implementation of training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and communication skills could further equip employees to navigate the challenges associated with biased reporting. Managers should also be educated about the potential benefits of biased reporting, recognizing when it serves to preserve morale and team cohesion, enabling them to respond constructively to such behaviors.

In conclusion, our study reveals that biased reporting is a complex social phenomenon with significant implications for organizational dynamics. By fostering an atmosphere of trust and transparency, organizations can mitigate the negative aspects of biased reporting, ultimately promoting a healthier and more productive organizational culture. This study highlights the importance of interpersonal trust and perceived authenticity in shaping biased reporting behaviors. Drawing on insights from Broschak and Davis-Blake (2006), we argue that trust and authenticity in employee-employer relationships significantly influence whether employees engage in biased reporting. These factors help explain how employees navigate organizational norms and pressures, determining whether biased reporting is employed as a self-protective strategy or a response to contextual dynamics within the workplace.

5.2 Managerial implications

It is crucial for managers to cultivate an environment where employees feel

comfortable expressing their thoughts and concerns. An open workplace culture fosters inclusivity and the exchange of diverse perspectives, which can significantly enhance problem-solving and decision-making processes (Edmondson, 1999). Specifically, managers are encouraged to engage actively with their employees, creating channels through which voices can be heard without fear of backlash or marginalization.

The key implication for management is the recognition that biased reporting serves not only as an individual phenomenon influenced by personal motivations but also as a construct shaped by the broader organizational environment. When performance is closely tied to rewards, such as promotions or other advancement opportunities, employees may feel pressure to conform to perceived expectations, often leading to biases in reporting (Van den Bos and Lind, 2013). This dynamic may be particularly pronounced in performance-oriented departments where metrics heavily dictate professional advancement.

To mitigate the adverse effects of biased reporting, effective leadership must prioritize establishing trust. A trusting relationship between employees and management has been shown to reduce feelings of insecurity regarding career progression when discussing organizational challenges (Farndale *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, managers must demonstrate a commitment to transparency and integrity in decision-making processes, fostering a culture where honest dialogue is not only tolerated but encouraged.

Managers must also recognize the interplay between organizational policies and individual motivations. For example, reward systems disproportionately emphasize outcomes over processes may unintentionally encourage biased reporting. Thus, adopting a balanced evaluation framework that values transparency and collaborative efforts can help mitigate this issue.

In conclusion, addressing the pervasive issue of biased reporting within organizations necessitates comprehensive strategies that foster trust, open communication, and a culture receptive to both successes and failures. By recognizing the nuanced motives behind employee reporting and implementing practical strategies directed at cultivating transparency, managers can create a

more effective corporate environment that enhances decision-making and promotes organizational integrity.

5.3 Limitations and directions for future research

Our study provides a foundational understanding of biased reporting within organizational contexts, focusing on its identification and classification. However, this examination has several limitations that should be acknowledged to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. One significant limitation is the reliance on self-reported measures, which introduces the possibility of common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Self-reported data may lead to inflated correlations between variables due to shared measurement methods, potentially skewing our results. Future research should utilize multimethod approaches, incorporating objective assessments and third-party evaluations to mitigate this limitation and enhance the validity of findings.

Additionally, our sample consisted entirely of Taiwanese executives, which may limit the external validity of our conclusions. The characteristics and behaviors associated with biased reporting may vary significantly across cultural contexts (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, future studies must explore the prevalence and manifestations of biased reporting in diverse cultural settings. Comparative studies across various geographic and organizational cultures would enrich our understanding and contribute to the generalizability of the results.

Moreover, while our study posited that contextual factors influence the intent behind biased reporting, further investigation is necessary to elucidate the specific attributional processes that drive such behavior. Existing literature suggests that interpersonal dynamics, such as trust and perceived authenticity in employee-employer interactions, significantly influence reporting behaviors (Broschak and Davis-Blake, 2006). Future research should examine these relational dynamics through the lens of attribution theory to provide deeper insights into when and why employees may resort to biased reporting.

In addition, our analysis did not account for individual differences in motivation, an area that warrants further exploration. Individuals' personal

histories, values, and perceived organizational justice may be critical in their propensity to engage in biased reporting (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Future studies could incorporate measures of individual differences to understand better heterogeneity in reporting behaviors.

Furthermore, expanding on the implications of voice behavior within the context of social exchanges is essential. Although we acknowledge the negative impacts of less-than-forthright reporting, the literature on the social dynamics of voice behavior within organizations is sparse (Memon and Ghani, 2020). Future research could focus on differentiating between constructive and destructive forms of voice behavior, examining when voice serves as a tool for positive change versus when it may perpetuate biases and hinder organizational effectiveness.

In conclusion, while our current study sheds light on biased reporting, it opens up many avenues for future research. By addressing the highlighted limitations and pursuing the proposed directions, scholars can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon and ultimately develop strategies to mitigate adverse organizational impacts.

6. Conclusion

In the context of voice and defensive voice literature, this research provides critical insights into how biased reporting serves as a mechanism for individuals to navigate perceived threats in their environments. A defensive voice, characterized by a reluctance to share dissenting opinions due to fear of repercussions, can lead to the proliferation of biased narratives that distort the truth. This study enriches the voice literature by examining how organizational actors may engage in biased reporting as a protective mechanism, ultimately contributing to an understanding of the psychological and social factors that motivate such behavior.

The exploration of self-protection and self-benefit through the lens of biased reporting reveals critical dimensions that have remained under-examined in existing research. While prior studies have addressed self-serving biases in decision-making, they have often overlooked how these biases manifest in

reporting behaviors. This study addresses this void by demonstrating how individuals may skew narratives to align with their interests or protect their standing, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on self-interest in communication and relational dynamics.

From a theoretical perspective, this research illuminates the interplay between cognitive biases and communication behaviors, offering a rich framework for understanding how biased reporting can emerge as a strategic response to environmental stressors. Practically, the findings of this study have significant implications for organizational leaders and communication strategists, emphasizing the need for awareness of biased reporting tendencies and fostering environments that promote transparency and open dialogue. Ultimately, by addressing both theoretical constructs and practical applications, this research not only enriches the academic discourse but also serves as a valuable resource for practitioners aiming to mitigate the adverse effects of biased reporting.

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