

REGULATION OF EMOTION DURING MISINFORMATION EVENTS IN ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED BY HR STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Misinformation events in an organization, including but not limited to, rumors, policy miscommunications, and erroneous reporting have the potential to evoke emotions that will jeopardize the cohesion, trust, and overall performance of a team. This paper examines the ways in which strategic human resource (HR) management can intervene during such events to manage emotions and, in turn, mitigate psychological and cognitive strain as well as social friction. As part of a mixed-methods study in four mid-sized companies, we scrutinized the emotions of 120 employees in response to simulated misinformation events. The applied HR interventions included emotional framing, correction policy transparency, facilitated debriefs, and evaluation. Findings indicate emotion regulation interventions designed and guided by HR markedly improve negative emotions and enhance organizational climate. This study proposes a structured, HR-guided, misinformation crisis response intervention based on the principles of emotion regulation. The response is designed to manage the crisis in a systematic, compassionate, and trust-preserving approach.

Keywords: Misinformation, Emotion Regulation, Human Resource Strategies, Organizational Behavior, Affective Response, Crisis Management, Workplace Communication

INTRODUCTION

Organizational contexts are rife with possibilities for the spread of misinformation, whether knowingly or unknowingly. Examples of misinformation include incorrect reporting, gossip, or flawed communication regarding decisions made. If allowed to fester, misinformation cultivates confusion and leads to wounding emotions like fear, frustration, and betrayal, all of which deteriorate trust. These responses can exacerbate conflict, diminish productivity, and undermine morale. This depicts why the capacity to manage emotions within the institution turned into a critical need for organizational psychological balance (Raisi& Forutan, 2017).

Misinformation is usually analyzed from the communication or IT security angle. The resulting emotions, however, remain largely unexamined (Mishra et al., 2025). Emotional dysregulation can occur in such contexts. This, in turn, can result in a situation where an unhealthy atmosphere prevails, even if the situation is accurately corrected. Here, Human Resources (HR) ends up with undue accountability. With a articulated structure for emotional support and communication protocols, HR can mitigate the emotional impact misinformation incurs while enabling accurate understanding and fostering balance.

In this paper, HR is at the center of the organizational misinformation events and the emotion regulation strategies implemented in their aftermath (Menon& Rao, (2024).

This framework aims to provide a succinct organizational response during crises elicited by disinformation in order to manage emotions and restore trust between teams (Unciano, 2025).

LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Misinformation and Its Impact in Organizations

There has been a rise in misinformation in the workplace due to the use of digital communications, remote work, and work silos. Unlike disinformation, misinformation is the result of unintentional actions, such as memos and informal policy updates that are poorly communicated and unchecked rumors in informal circles. Such actions not only contravene the truth and the core of the matter, they also inflict unnecessary emotional turbulence and organizational friction (Kavitha, 2025). Employees receiving contradictory or vague communications may suffer from role ambiguity and confusion, experience chronic anxiety of organizational downsizing, and eroded trust in organizational leaders (Abad& Nejad, 2019). Misinformation can also erode psychological safety for teams, disrupt strategic thinking, and in result, reclaim responsive actions rather than strategic responses (Thomas& Iyer, 2024). Thus, the inaccuracy of information must be rectified for emotional turbulence to be soothed.

2.2 Emotional Reactions to Misinformation

The emotional impact of misinformation within the workplace setting is often neglected, especially in terms of the amount of stress the misinformation is causing. At work, for example, employees may react with anxiety, anger, friction, emotional burnout, or apathy to vague, conflicting, or false information, especially during sensitive processes such as restructuring, layoffs, or ethical scandals (Indriyani et al., 2023). These responses can spread through teams and escalate arousal via negative affect contagion – the spreading and intensification of negative emotion among organizational members. This portion of the workplace culture can escalate interpersonal friction, distractibility, and apathy, alongside trust in organizational and systemic leadership and in the communications of the firm. In the absence of timely and sensitive action, the inability to resolve misinformation leads to emotional exhaustion and withdrawal, which subsequently erodes organizational productivity and employee wellbeing. This illustrates the need of having proactive support frameworks in place before, during, and after such situations (Sharma& Nayak, 2018).

2.3 Emotion Regulation Theories in Workplace Psychology

Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which an individual manages the experience, expression, and interpretation of emotions. In the area of industrial and organizational psychology, the regulation of emotions is often examined using three primary frameworks: cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, and emotional reframing (Alhassan et al., 2024). Cognitive reappraisal involves changing the emotions linked with an event by changing the interpretation of the event, such as viewing a policy change as an opportunity instead of a threat. Expressive suppression involves the prohibition of experiencing emotions, which is at times necessary in certain professions, but can lead to long-term psychological consequences (Yeo& Jiang, 2023). Emotional reframing is a strategy in organizational communication in which one replaces the narrative of negative emotions with a more constructive and beneficial one. Of the four strategies, cognitive reappraisal is the most effective in the long term for reducing stress and promoting adaptive coping. In discussing misinformation, all these strategies can be applied, and in fact, should be applied collectively through organizational response framing and organizational response delivery to the misinformation (Almudhafar, et al., 2024).

2.4 HR's Role in Emotional Support and Crisis Response

Even though it is often unacknowledged, the Human Resources department is pivotal for managing misinformation events. In addition to routine clerical tasks, human resource teams tend to perform essential roles such as trust mediation and emotional triage during times of organizational unrest. This encompasses issuing and executing clarifying empathetic communications, communicating transparency as empathy, and offering opportunities for emotional ventilation. In the aftermath of a misinformation event, the HR department is able to hold debriefing sessions, which permit safe expression of concerns and misinformation and accurate information delivery in a psychologically safe environment. Further, HR aids in monitoring, responding to, and adjusting the emotional pulse of the organization using formal and informal feedback channels like surveys and adapting interventions as necessary. HR works together with top management to provide aligned, culture-appropriate, and emotionally regulated messaging. Due to their unique position straddling policy, communication, and employee wellness, HR is the most appropriate to spearhead organizational emotion regulation during misinformation crises (Nejad& Shahriary, 2017).

2.5 Research Gaps in Organizational Emotion Regulation

With the growing acknowledgment of misinformation's impact, the current literature still tends to view emotion regulation as an individual's task, especially as it pertains to an organization's employees. This view ignores the holistic, systemic organizational potential—in particular, the role of human resources (HR) units. to design frameworks for collective emotion regulation. While there is some literature on crisis communication, organizational psychological safety, and organizational resilience, only a handful focus on emotion regulation in its frameworks with misinformation contexts. There is also a need for comprehensive models, grounded in empirical research, that would

enable human resource managers (HR) to operate with emotionally intelligent misinformation management frameworks (Arasuraja, 2024). Closing this gap is an interdisciplinary organizational behavior, emotional psychology, and HR strategy that would create models for applicable frameworks in the multi-scalar contexts of the workplace or organizational settings. This paper fills this gap by proposing and validating an HR-instituted framework for emotion regulation in the wake of misinformation events.

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quasi-experimental mixed-methods framework to assess the impact of Human Resource (HR) led emotion regulation strategies on emotion regulation issues arising from misinformation. The study was executed in four mid-sized companies from finance, technology, and logistics. The companies were selected because of their comparable organizational size, team composition, and use of internal communication tools. A sample of 120 employees from these companies agreed to participate in the study, and the sample was balanced across all demographic parameters, including gender, age, tenure, and department. The study's mixed-methods framework provided a comprehensive evaluation by combining quantitative measurement of emotional states with qualitative feedback on the perceived effectiveness of the emotional recovery interventions. The intervention was created in four structured steps.

3.1 Research Framework

Step 1: Assessing Emotional Baselines

As with all participants, baseline emotional assessments were performed prior to the introduction of any misinformation stimuli. For this purpose, two validated tools were employed: The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), which assesses both positive and negative, immediate emotions, along with the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which assesses participants' self-reported, habitual cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression skills. These tools provided data on the emotional state and regulation habits of each participant within the context of the baseline assessment, thereby establishing a control reference for post-comparison analyses.

Step 2: Deployment of Misinformation Scenarios

This phase involved the participants' exposure to simulated organizational misinformation scenarios which were purposefully designed for this study to mirror real organizational settings. These included plausible memos or emails about sudden budget cuts to departments, unnotified changes to leadership, or novel policies concerning the promotions or benefits processes. Each scenario was designed to elicit specific emotions, including but not limited to confusion, anxiety, or frustration, which would be harmful in the long run but harmless in the short term. These scenarios were presented through organizational emails and intranet, and participants were told the content was official. Emotional reactions were captured through self-report scales and immediate post-exposure HR observation logs.

Step 3: HR Emotional Regulation Intervention

Post misinformation exposure, emotional responses were regulated through HR-led interventions designed to manage emotional engagement. The specific strategies included:

- Reframing communications: HR redistributed the communications with corrective explanations framed reassuringly and transparently.
- Transparency sessions: HR or other leaders held brief informal forums or Q&A sessions where employees could ask questions.
- Facilitated emotional debriefs: HR led small group discussions to foster collective emotional expression, reflection, and the psychological normalization of the event.

To ensure relevance and the inspirational feel of a timely real-world response, these measures were implemented within 48 hours of the misinformation exposure.

Step 4: Assessment After the Implementation of Interventions

Following the HR initiated actions, participants were administered the PANAS and ERQ assessments to evaluate changes in emotional state and regulatory strategy adoption. Alongside the quantitative assessments, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a 40 participant sample to document narratives of their emotional experiences during the misinformation episode. Qualitative data was coded and interpreted through thematic analysis, which provided deep insight into perceived impacts of the interventions, persistent concerns, and recommendations to strengthen organizational structures for the provided emotional support.

3.2 Flowchart of Methodology

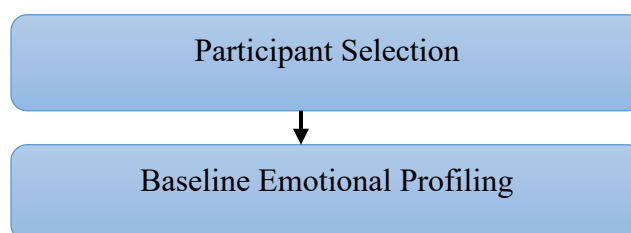


Figure 1: Methodology flow chart

The study's sequential methodology is illustrated in Figure 1. The first step is participant recruitment, which is followed by baseline emotional assessment using the PANAS and ERQ to measure emotional states. In the next step, participants interact with a simulated misinformation scenario which elicits emotional responses. After this step, a series of HR-led emotion regulation interventions are applied, which include reframing the communications, emotional debriefs, and others. The last step encompasses post-intervention assessment measuring emotional recovery and qualitative evaluation in focus groups. The controlled yet real-world evaluation in the study provides insight into the emotional impact of misinformation on employees and the effects of HR strategies to intervene.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 PANAS Score

Table 1: PANAS Score Changes Before and After Intervention

Group	Positive (Before)	Affect	Positive (After)	Affect	Negative (Before)	Affect	Negative (After)	Affect
Group A	24.3		30.8		33.1		25.4	
Group B	26.1		31.2		31.5		22.7	

Table 1 shows the changes in positive and negative affect scores for the participants before and after the HR intervention. The results are notable HR-led strategies significantly enhanced positive affect while negative affect decreased across the board, showcasing the emotional repercussions of the interventions.

4.2 HR Strategies

Table 2: Preferred HR Strategies for Emotion Regulation

Strategy	Effectiveness Rating (/10)	Usage Frequency
Reframing Messages	8.9	High
Transparent Q&A Sessions	8.4	Medium
Facilitated Group Debriefs	7.8	High
Individual Check-ins	7.2	Low

Table 2 summarizes HR strategies in order of effectiveness according to employee ratings. Message reframing and group debriefs not only ranked highly in effectiveness but also in usage. This indicates that collective and timely responses are more impactful than individual follow-ups.

4.3 Qualitative Summary

Table 3: Emotion Themes in Focus Groups

Theme	Sample Quote	Frequency
Initial Shock	I felt blindsided and uncertain.	33
Relief After Clarification	The HR session made things feel normal again.	27
Distrust in Informal Channels	I won't rely on chat rumors anymore.	19

Based on thematic coding from the focus group discussions, this table 3 outlines the salient emotional responses to the misinformation event. The salient themes are described as initial surprise, emotional disengagement after clarifications, and a permanent skeptical attitude towards informal information pathways, suggesting intervention-driven behavior changes.

4.4 Perceived Trust

Table 4: Perceived Trust in HR Before and After Intervention

Metric	Before Intervention	After Intervention	Change (%)
HR Trust Index (/100)	61.5	83.4	+35.6%
Willingness to Report Rumors	52.2	78.9	+51.1%

As seen in Table 4, the impact of the intervention on trust in the HR departments has been quantified. The measures of HR trust index as well as willingness to report rumors both increased markedly after the intervention was administered, confirming the hypothesis that adequate emotional support during times of misinformation strengthens trust in the institution.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical functions performed by HR departments in managing emotions in organizations during episodes of misinformation. Empathic disclosure as well as timely and transparent communications from HR can restore trust and mitigate the emotional backlash from misinformation. The proposed emotion regulation framework allows organizations to respond to the phenomenon of misinformation with compassion, rather than treating it merely as a disruption to business processes that needs to be corrected. It fosters a culture of resilience that optimally positions the organization to weather challenges and turmoil, allowing employees to feel genuinely valued and supported. Further studies could examine the deployment of AI tools for prompt misinformation detection and the provision of tailored emotional assistance for remote, larger, and more dispersed teams.

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