

Fighting for What's Fair: Illegitimacy Appraisals as Drivers of Different Collective Action Responses to Economic Inequality

Authors : Finn Lannon, Jenny Roth, Roland Deutsch, Eric Igou

Abstract : The world continues to be rife with economic inequality, which has an impact on how people think and behaves in response to large and often growing gaps in wealth. Large gaps in earnings between groups within a particular organization, area or society can create tension between groups. Collective action tendencies (to protest, sign a petition, vote on behalf of an ingroup etc.) are also a growing phenomenon globally. Research shows that economic inequality promotes social processes such as appraisals of illegitimacy, which are recognized antecedents of collective action. This paper examines different types of collective action intentions among middle-status group members in response to economic inequality in two studies. Study 1 (N = 72) demonstrates a causal link between high economic inequality and collective action intentions of middle-status group members both to reduce inequality and to improve group status. A second pre-registered study (N = 432) examines key drivers of these relationships, including illegitimacy appraisals and direction of intergroup comparison. Adding to the current understanding of the topic, distinctions between the illegitimacy of one's group status and the illegitimacy of societal inequality are found to mediate key relationships between economic inequality and relevant collective action types. The direction of intergroup comparison (upwards vs. downwards) is also shown to have a significant impact on collective action intentions to improve group status. Findings add to the understanding of the consequences of economic inequality and drivers of collective action intentions.

Keywords : economic inequality, collective action, legitimacy, social psychology

Conference Title : ICP 2023 : International Conference on Psychology

Conference Location : Dublin, Ireland

Conference Dates : August 24-25, 2023