

# Research on Non-contingent Punishment and its Influence

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**Abstract.** According to relevant literature, this paper summarizes the connotation of non-contingent punishment, and focuses on the summary of the influence mechanism of non-contingent punishment, with a view to combing and improving the literature of non-contingent punishment, and looks forward to the new research perspective and direction of non-contingency punishment in the future.

**Keywords:** Non-contingent Punishment, Perceived Organizational Justice, Satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

Punishment is a common management tactic in both Chinese and western companies. In order to manage subordinates effectively, especially the new generation of employees with prominent personalities, leaders often replace management with punishment, and restrain employees' violation through severe punishment, so as to make an example. In fact, there are great differences in leaders' punishment behaviors. Leaders rely more on work experience and restrain employees' behaviors by warning, demerit recording, fine, demotion or even dismissal. Podsakoff et al. (1982) divided punishment behavior into contingent punishment and non-contingent punishment in the process of exploring how leaders use rewards and punishments to influence the performance and attitude of subordinates. Among them, non-contingent punishment has attracted the attention of many scholars, and through empirical way to prove what kind of results it will bring. However, these studies usually discuss punishment and reward behavior together and fail to systematically review non-contingency punishment alone. The research on non-contingency punishment is helpful to rationally use and manage the means of punishment and improve the effect of punishment implementation. Therefore, on the basis of combing relevant literatures, this paper expounds the influence effect of non-contingent punishment, which provides references for future studies on non-contingent punishment and provides a basis for leaders to rationally use non-contingent punishment in practice.

## 2. Connotation of Non-contingent Punishment

When Podsakoff et al. (1982) discussed the relationship between leaders' reward and punishment behaviors and subordinates' performance and satisfaction, especially transactional leaders, he divided punishment behaviors into non-contingent punishment and contingent punishment for the first time. Podsakoff et al. (1982) think that non-contingent punishment is undeserved punishment or excessive punishment that is not commensurate with the performance and performance of subordinates. Podsakoff et al. (1984) argued that non-contingent punishment means some supervisors punish subordinates indiscriminately or without any obvious reason. Zhang, Liu and Ding (2018) argued that non-contingent punishment refers to those actions that are not punished according to the negligence of subordinates [1]. In practice, non-contingent punishment is often manifested as the punishment behavior that is not commensurate with the negligence behavior, which mainly refers to the situation of excessive punishment and gratuitous punishment. To sum up, we think that non-contingent punishment is to punish subordinates for their negligence, or to punish subordinates without negligence.

### **3. The Influence Mechanism of Non-contingent Punishment**

#### **3.1 The Influence Mechanism of Non-contingent Punishment on Individual Level**

Based on neutralization techniques theory, Zhang, Liu and Ding (2018) found that non-contingent punishment was significantly positively correlated with deviant behavior, and the difference sequence atmosphere regulated the relationship between the two [2]. Moreover, moral disengagement plays an intermediary role between non-contingent punishment and deviant behavior. Based on the self-determination theory, Ding and Zhang (2018) took coal employees as samples to explore the relationship between non-contingent punishment and safe operation behavior [3]. The results showed that non-contingent punishment was negatively correlated with safe operation behavior, and Emotional exhaustion played a mediating role. Based on the attribution theory, Zhang and Ding (2018) investigated whether non-contingent punishment would lead employees to engage in silent confrontation by means of silence [4]. The results show that non-contingent punishment is negatively correlated with employees' silence, and organizational equity perception plays a mediating role. In particular, the study mentioned that, in the male sample, reward neglect had a moderating effect on the non-contingent punishment and the perceived organizational justice, while in the female sample, the moderating effect of reward neglect was not significant, which may indicate that there was a gender difference in the negative impact of leadership non-contingent punishment on employees. Based on the perspectives of self-determination theory and organizational support theory, Zhang et al. (2018) found that non-contingent punishment is negatively correlated with employee organizational identification, and perceived organizational justice plays a mediating role, while organizational communication openness plays a moderating role [1]. Based on attribution theory and social exchange theory, Zhang et al. (2018) found that non-contingent punishment negatively affected employees' willingness to extra work and positively affected employees' perceptions of organization politics, and employees' perceptions of organization politics played a mediating role between non-contingent punishment and employees' willingness to extra work [5]. Among them, the study predicts the higher emotional trust, was influenced by the non-contingent punishment for the employees' perceptions of organization politics is weak, but the results of the study on the contrary, the authors think that it is due to the particularity of Chinese situation, leadership and staff to build up high emotional trust, often become "in-group", the contingent punishment to employees as a "out-group" illusion, thus deepening the employee's perceptions of organization politics. Based on uncertainty management theory (TMT), Bonner (2016) found that non-contingent punishment promoted the employees' perceptions of uncertainty. The study also found that non-contingent punishment increased employees' perceptions of uncertainty and reduced employees' perception of justice, thus stimulating unethical behavior. Podsakoff (1982) found a negative correlation between non-contingent punishment and employee performance and satisfaction in the study, but failed to find the moderating effect of employee performance between non-contingent punishment and employee satisfaction. Thau et al. (2008) based on the social exchange theory and adaptation theory, find the non-contingent punishment is negatively related to the organizational citizenship behavior, this negative correlations in the samples of white than black samples. This is due to the fact that black people are constantly exposed to negative results in different social areas and they have become accustomed to the actual bullying in the organization, which indicates that different groups have different degrees of acceptance of non-contingent punishment.

#### **3.2 The Influence Mechanism of Non-contingent Punishment on Group Level**

Tremblay et al. (2012) found that non-contingent punishment is negatively correlated with distributive justice, procedural justice and satisfaction, and that non-contingent punishment has a far greater negative impact on distributive justice than procedural justice [6]. Podsakoff and Todor (1985) found that there was a negative relationship between non-contingent punishment and team motivation, indicating that the implementation of non-contingent punishment would reduce the team's execution motivation.

## 4. Summary and Prospect

As a means of punishment, non-contingent punishment has attracted the attention of organizational behaviorists in recent years. Recent studies mainly focus on the impact of non-contingent punishment on employee behavior and work attitude from the individual level, and less consider the impact of non-contingent punishment on the organization from the group level. In the future, the impact mechanism of non-contingent punishment should be discussed more from the group level. For example, it studies how non-contingency punishment affects organizational performance and organizational innovation. An in-depth study of non-contingent punishment can help people understand when and when it is good for leaders to impose punishment, and when and when it is bad for leaders to impose punishment.

China is a power-oriented country, and the rewards and punishments behaviors of its leaders have a profound impact on their subordinates. Punishment is an important management means for leaders to implement. In-depth research on punishment behavior, especially non-contingent punishment, can help Chinese managers to use punishment means reasonably, manage subordinates better and stimulate their work enthusiasm.

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