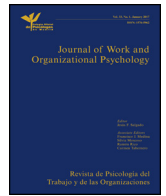




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## The mediating and moderating role of burnout and emotional intelligence in the relationship between organizational justice and work misbehavior<sup>☆</sup>

Or Shkoler\*, Aharon Tziner

School Behavioral Studies, Netanya Academic College, Israel

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### ABSTRACT

The current research (Figure 1) examined the antecedents of work misbehaviors (WMBs) by means of organizational justice perceptions (as a predictor), experienced burnout (as a mediator), and emotional intelligence (as a buffer). A heterogeneous sample of 243 employees was acquired in order to assess correlative associations between the variables, a mediation effect, and two moderation effects. In order to test the mediation effect further and the model fit, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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## El papel mediador y moderador del *burnout* y de la inteligencia emocional en la relación entre la justicia organizacional y el mal comportamiento en el trabajo

### RESUMEN

Esta investigación (figura 1) analiza los antecedentes del mal comportamiento en el trabajo a través de la percepción de la justicia organizacional (como predictor), el *burnout* (como mediador) y la inteligencia emocional (como amortiguador). Se utilizó una muestra heterogénea compuesta por 243 empleados para evaluar las asociaciones correlativas entre las variables, un efecto mediador y dos efectos moderadores. Con el fin de confirmar el efecto de mediación y el ajuste del modelo se utilizó el modelado de ecuaciones estructurales. Se comentan las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas.

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*Palabras clave:*

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Research of human motivation aims to discover the processes by which personal endogenous forces (internal psychological forces, such as drives and beliefs), in conjunction with exogenous forces (external or environmental forces, such as changes in the stability of rewards), determine the direction, intensity, and persistence of a specific behavior (Tziner, Fein, & Oren, 2012; see also Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005).

Past research indicates various factors that may predict counterproductive work behaviors. These include *individual differences*, such as employees' personal traits and abilities (e.g., Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Dalal, 2005; Dilchert, Ones, Davis, & Rostow, 2007; Salgado, 2002), *job experiences* (e.g., Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Kulas, McInerney, DeMuth, & Jadwinski, 2007), and *work stressors*, such as difficult work conditions, harsh supervision, role ambiguity, or role and interpersonal conflicts (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992; Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Spector & Fox, 2005). By way of illustration, dissatisfied employees are more likely to engage in theft behaviors (Kulas et al., 2007) and abusive supervision is prone to influence employees'

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\* Corresponding author.  
E-mail address: [or.shkoler@gmail.com](mailto:or.shkoler@gmail.com) (O. Shkoler).

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propensity to engage in negative employee behavior intended not only to harm the abuser but also to cause damage to the organization (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; see also Chen & Spector, 1992).

In the present work, we focused on destructive/dysfunctional organizational behaviors that constitute harm to organizational functioning. More specifically, we sought to ascertain the extent to which employees' interpretations of work environment characteristics (perceptions of organizational justice) and their experiences (burnout) associate with their misbehavior. In essence, this paper aims to investigate some of the motivational roots of such misbehaviors.

### Work Misbehavior (WMB)

In recent years, workplace misbehaviors (Berry et al., 2007; Bodankin & Tziner, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Dilchert et al., 2007; Levy & Tziner, 2011) and counterproductive work behaviors (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Ho, 2012; Levine, 2010) have gained much research attention, since they have been shown to have important economical, sociological, and psychological implications (Aubé, Rousseau, Mama, & Morin, 2009; Bodankin & Tziner, 2009). Such dysfunctional behaviors include theft, sabotage, withdrawal, harassment, and more (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Spector et al., 2006). Such behaviors almost invariably violate important organizational norms and harm organizations in several ways associated with the organization's goals, employees, procedures, productivity, and profitability (Aubé et al., 2009; Dalal, 2005; Lanyon & Goodstein, 2004; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005; Robinson, 2008; Spector & Fox, 2005; Spector et al., 2006; Vardi & Weitz, 2004). These behaviors are directed against the organization itself or its members, workers and management alike, and hence, are generally costly to both individuals and organizations (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).

### Organizational Justice

Perceptions of the degree to which an organization provides its employees with appropriate, fair and respectful treatment, adequate and accurate information, and resources and rewards are conceptualized as perceptions of organizational justice (see Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Bell, Wiechmann, & Ryan, 2006; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Tyler & Bies, 1990; Tziner & Chernyak-Hai, 2012). Employees establish their perceptions of organizational justice through (a) overall impressions that are a consequence of random organizational occurrences and (b) personal evaluations based on specific "organizational components," such as leaders and co-workers (Hollensbe, Khazanchi, & Masterson, 2008). Perceptions of organizational justice are typically broken down into perceptions of (a) *distributive* justice, (b) *procedural* justice, and (c) *interactional* justice (for further reading, see Colquitt et al., 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2002; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Moorman, 1991; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Notably, in the present study we were interested in the association of an overall perception of justice with work misbehavior.

### Organizational Justice and WMB

According to the equity theory (Adams, 1965) and the social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964), when employees nurture perceptions of injustice, they act to rectify the situation in an attempt to create balance. Such behaviors include reducing their inputs in order to balance the input-outcome comparison (Greenberg & Scott, 1996), developing negative feelings toward the organization,

experiencing less motivation, and manifesting distrust (toward the workplace and/or the manager), and even acting against the organization (Dailey & Kirk, 1992; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The association between organizational justice and/or fairness and WMBs has been upheld in previous studies (e.g., Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). As such, the first hypothesis is:

H1. Organizational justice is negatively associated with WMB.

### Burnout

Work burnout is described along three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, experienced distance from others (depersonalization), and feelings of diminished personal accomplishment (Jackson & Maslach, 1982). Burnout might lead employees to inferior job performance and sacrificing different aspects of personal life (Maslach, 2011). Work burnout has different negative outcomes for employees, such as absenteeism (Ahola et al., 2008), turnover (Shimizu, Feng, & Nagata, 2005), poorer job performance (Taris, 2006), working less safely (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2011), and even depressive symptoms and decreased life dissatisfaction (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012).

### Organizational Justice and Burnout

Various studies have highlighted the negative effects of perceived injustice on burnout (e.g., Brotheridge, 2003; Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993; Liljegren & Ekberg, 2009; Moliner, Martinez-Tur, Peiro, Ramos, & Cropanzano, 2005; Son, Kim, & Kim, 2014), but was not investigated even in a meta-analysis about justice (see Colquitt et al., 2001). However, not all dimensions of burnout and/or organizational justice were examined in these studies, and it further appears that the theoretical rationalization for linking the two constructs was vague. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the scant research concerning the linkage between organizational justice and burnout, the conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) may provide a reasonable explanation. The theory maintains that one aspires to obtain and conserve resources, both personal (e.g., expertise, self-esteem) and social (e.g., intimacy, tenure). An individual would experience psychological stress should there be (a) a risk of losing resources, (b) actual loss, or (c) a small return on a large initial investment of resources. Resources can be physical objects, personal characteristics (e.g., personality, endurance), situations (e.g., marriage, work), or energies (e.g., time, money), all of which are quantifiable and may be used to achieve goals or other resources. These resources have both instrumental and symbolic importance, the latter because individuals tend to use resources to define their identity; therefore, loss of resources might be threatening. In such a case, threatened individuals may act to minimize their loss of resources. Those with particularly weak strategies to deal with stress will also tend to develop maladaptive coping mechanisms. These include exchanging one resource for another (e.g., remarriage after divorce), investment in or use of other resources (e.g., investing reserve energy or additional time), changing the focus of attention (viewing a certain threat as a challenge), and reevaluating resources. Notably, however, the possible overload experienced in investing in additional resources could result in even greater stress and, ultimately, burnout (Tepper, 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). This also corresponds with the six 'work mismatches' of Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), specifically the fairness one (for further reading see Maslach et al., 2001).

H2. Organizational justice is negatively associated with burnout.

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