

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE EFFECT ON DEVIANT WORKPLACE BEHAVIORS: MODERATING ROLE OF MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Mehdi Sabokro^{1*}, Mehrdad Tavakoli², Milad Mohebbali Malmiri³

^{1*}Assistant Prof., Faculty of Economics, Management and accounting, Yazd University, Iran, Yazd; ^{2,3}M.A Student in Business Administration, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accounting, Yazd University, Iran, Yazd.
Email: ^{1*}msabokro@yazd.ac.ir, ²t.mehrdad61@gmail.com, ³mohebbali.milad@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The present study aims to investigate the effect of organizational injustice on deviant work behaviors with the moderating role of moral disengagement.

Methodology: The population was the undergraduate students in the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Accounting at a university from which 117 students were selected through convenience sampling. The data was gathered through conducting experiments and a questionnaire developed by Albert Bandura (1996).

Results: The results show that the perception of organizational injustice has a positive and significant effect on deviant work behaviors and this relation is moderated by the moral disengagement intention.

Applications of this study: This study can be very effective in improving the level of organizational justice.

The novelty of the study: The novelty of this investigating the effect of organizational injustice on deviant work behaviors.

Keywords: *Deviant Work Behaviors, Moral Disengagement Theory, Organizational Justice, Social Cognitive Theory.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the main concerns of efficient managers at different levels is how to provide an appropriate context for employees in all professions so that they put in optimal performance with a sense of responsibility and complete commitment to society and their profession. However, if employees discern that their needs are not met by their employers they tend to exhibit negative or even counterproductive behavior, which may hinder achieving organizational goals (Khattak et al., 2018). Such behaviors are called deviant behaviors also known as unacceptable behaviors, dysfunctional behaviors, etc.

Deviant work behaviors are those voluntary actions that violate organizational norms, and threatens the organization's and its employees' health. Depending on the type of injustice employees perceive, they may direct their deviant behavior toward individuals they hold responsible for the injustice or toward the organization they work for (Khattak et al., 2018; Bennett & Robinson, 2003). believe that Organizational deviant behavior in the workplace not only may inflict harm on an organizational member but also result in more detrimental effects on the organization by reducing employees' performance and commitment. Also, its consequences may go beyond the individuals who are directly engaged in affairs (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). Adopted a more comprehensive approach and stated that inappropriate organizational behavior affects not only the individuals in organizations but also the main organizational stakeholder outside organizations.

Based on the above-mentioned facts, deviant behaviors play a crucial role in organizations' improved or weak performance and the necessity of recognizing the factors leading to such behaviors is undeniable. The studies conducted in this field reveal that perceived organizational justice is one of the most important reasons for deviant work behaviors (Ambrose, Seabright, Schminke, 2002; Chernyak-Hai L, A Tziner, 2014; Kerwin, Jordan & Turner, 2015).

Research shows that justice processes play an important role in organizations, and they also explain the manner in which employees' beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and behavior are formed in the interactions between employees and organizations. (Jafari & Bidarian, 2012). stated that organizational justice has a positive and significant effect on employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Also, the extant literature shows that the perception of justice on the part of employees can affect their organizational commitment, intention to leave, and job satisfaction, etc. (Khattak et al., 2018).

In contrast, when people are faced with unjust behavior, they may show negative emotions such as outrage and resentment, and a desire for revenge and retaliation (Folger, 1993). through deviant behaviors such as sabotage, vandalism, reduced OCB, withdrawal (Jermier, Knights & Nord, 1994). and stealing from the organization (Greenberg, 1990). Therefore, understanding the manner in which organizational justice influences individuals' satisfaction and commitment seems absolutely vital because failing to consider the issues of justice or injustice and their outcomes in the organization can bring about harm to organizations (Lambert et al., 2019).

Deviant behavior is problematic to organizations and their members. It also affects organizational performance and makes achieving organizational goals difficult, and it also makes organizations incur enormous costs (Harisur, Howladar, Rahman, and Uddin, 2018). Deviant behavior at work can result in catastrophic revenue losses and/or more

long-lasting damages to the atmosphere in organizations. Also, organizations may incur other harms and costs such as insurance losses, tarnished reputations, increased turnover, etc. ([Appelbaum, Deguire, & M lay, 2005](#)). Therefore, failing to consider and pay attention to the reasons for deviant behavior will result in their frequent recurrence and display in organizations and may lead to serious problems for organizations and their members and even their destruction. Therefore the present study aims at studying the effect of perceived organizational justice on the exhibition of deviant work behaviors with a tendency toward moral disengagement as the moderating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deviant behavior at work is voluntary behavior that threatens important organizational norms, organizational welfare, and its good performance ([Yen and Teng, 2013](#)). According to ([Bennett & Robinson, 2003](#)), organizational deviant behavior is voluntary behavior that forms organizational norms and is a threat to individuals' or organizations' satisfactory and flawless performance or the performance of them both. Deviant work behavior has a voluntary origin because employees have no motive to conform to norms, or based on a different view, they are provoked to violate these norms. The key point about deviant behavior is that it is against organizational norms, because some behavior may be considered as positive by society while it is regarded as deviant by organizations, and some socially unacceptable behavior is in concordance with organizational norms ([Fayazi & Aslani, 2015](#)).

According to [Watson \(2003\)](#) activities inconsistent with administrative and cultural structures of organizations as well as their laws, challenge dominant and prevailing tendencies and procedures in organizations, and behavior that is displayed beyond the area of the acceptable professional behavior is regarded as organizational misbehavior. These kinds of behaviors are mostly unconventional and unlawful and include aggressive behavior that inflicts physical and mental harm on employees and brings about irreversible damage to organizations ([Blonder, 2006](#)). Deviant behavior is provoked in different ways and is shown on purpose. Therefore, behavior which as a result of a wrong decision or by mistake, leads to a loss and damage is not regarded as deviant, and the organization should always have a system to control these mistakes. Based on the definition of workplace deviance by ([Bennett & Robinson, 2003](#)), which is "Voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members or both, these behaviors are neither accidental nor unintentional. They must be displayed premeditatedly and consciously so as to be called deviant behaviors ([Khattak et al., 2018](#)). All in all deviant behavior falls into two categories of interpersonal deviant behavior and organizational deviant behavior.

1. Interpersonal deviant behavior: This kind of behavior focuses on the relationships between members of an organization, such as: impolite or harmful behavior toward colleagues ([Colbert et al., 2004](#)).
2. Organizational deviant behavior: Behavior such as theft, laziness, damaging company assets, etc. which are related to organizations.

Role theory, in explaining the behavior shown by people in different positions, deduces that individuals, in their roles, display behavior that maximizes their earnings. Therefore, discipline and compensation systems should be designed in such a way that they reward appropriate behavior and punish inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, not only the process of yielding rewards and administering punishments but also the method of their determination should be just. Performance appraisal systems should set standards for all employees. In other words, they should be consistent. That way, people will feel that consequences are distributed fairly, hence a decrease in deviant behavior. When punishment is necessary, the fairness, clearness, and explicitness of disciplinary procedures or policies can help deal with and confront deviant behavior ([Litzky, Eddleston, & Kidder, 2006](#)). Based on recent studies, once employees feel that they are treated fairly by their organization and the people in power, they will, most probably, exhibit positive behavior and attitudes ([Kerwin, Jordan & Turner, 2015](#)).

Justice refers to the manner of the distribution of rewards and punishments by and within social collectives, and the way people manage their relationships. It is also about whether they perceive what they or others receive as of right and just ([Folger & Konovsky, 1989](#)). The concept of organizational justice was first developed in philosophy and then made its way into the social psychology literature. Organizational justice refers to the perception of justice in the workplace. In organizational justice, the fair manner of behavior toward employees is examined. The concept of organizational justice is about individuals' (or groups') description of justice at work and their reactions to such perception. Organizational justice refers to the observance of justice in organizational reward systems. It is believed that organizational justice is the fair and just treatment of employees by their organization as is perceived by the employees.

The two most important dimensions of organizational justice are distributive and procedural justice ([Greenberg, 1982](#); [Lambert, Hogan & Griffin, 2007](#); [Lambert et al, 2019](#)). However, later, one more dimension, namely interactional justice which includes interpersonal justice and informational justice ([Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002](#)), was added to the two previous dimensions.

Distributive justice: It refers to the fairness of important organizational outcomes such as pay, fringe benefits, promotions, work schedules, job evaluations, performance appraisals, etc. as they are perceived by employees ([Greenberg, 1982](#); [Griffin, Hepburn, 2005](#); [Lambert et al., 2019](#)).

Procedural Justice: It refers to the perceptions that the processes and procedures which are used by organizations for the purpose of reaching organizational outcomes and goals are just and fair ([Greenberg, 1982](#); [Lambert et al., 2019](#); [Qureshi et al., 2017](#)).

Interactional Justice: Interactional justice, which is separated into the two dimensions of informational justice and interpersonal justice, is regarded as the social form of justice. It refers to the fairness of the interpersonal treatment which individuals receive from a decision-maker. Two dimensions of treatment have been shown to be important to judgments of interactional justice: explanations and interpersonal sensitivity ([Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002](#)).

Moral disengagement theory can be considered as a part of Albert Bandura's general theory called a social cognitive theory. According to this theory, moral disengagement is people's tendency to recall cognitive mechanisms that restructure people's behavior so that their wrong behavior can be moderated ([Hystad, Mearns, & Eid, 2013](#)), and diminishes their responsibility for their actions. It also decreases the feelings of distress resulting from hurting others. To put it more clearly, people pick up the habit of underestimating the content and importance of their actions, and, in the long run, they ignore the moral self-regulating processes of their behavior ([Moore, 2015](#)). The moral disengagement mechanisms are categorized in three groups:

The first group includes moral justification, euphemistic labeling, and advantageous comparison. With the help of this group of mechanisms, individuals try to perform a cognitive restructuring on the immoral acts they have carried out so that they are able to show the act as less harmful and more moral ([Hystad, Mearns & Eid, 2013](#)).

The second group includes displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility, both of which are used to reduce the role of the agent in the harm which results from the act performed by him or her. Displacement of responsibility is the people's tendency to attribute the responsibility for the act to the sources of power. For instance, when someone claims that they were made to do something by their supervisors, they are using displacement of responsibility. Diffusion of responsibility focuses on individuals' tendency to diffuse the responsibility for the mistake they make among the members of the group to which they belong. These mechanisms work by absolving people of the moral responsibility for the act ([Hystad, Mearns & Eid, 2013](#)).

The third group of moral disengagement theory mechanisms includes dehumanization, distortion of consequences, and attribution of blame. This group of mechanisms shows the effects of one's act by minimizing the results of that act. This group, unlike the first group, does not intend to show acts as positive. It functions by minimizing the effects of the results of one's acts on others and assumes that the victim receives what he or she deserves ([Hystad, Mearns & Eid, 2013](#)).

([Yıldız et al., 2015](#)), in a research entitled "A Proposed Conceptual Model of Destructive Deviance: The Mediator Role of Moral Disengagement" concluded that employees' negative perceptions, feelings, and thoughts result in negative deviance through moral disengagement. ([Fida et al., 2014](#)) also infers from his research that employees who are exposed to negative feelings resulting from stressful and tension-producing stimuli display more counterproductive behavior as a result of the lower tendency toward moral engagement. ([Chernyak-Hai, Tziner 2014](#)) studied the relation between counterproductive behavior at work, perception of organizational atmosphere and justice, job status, and leader-member exchange and claimed distributive justice as one of the influential factors in the emergence of deviant behavior. According to ([Hystad, Mearns, & Eid, 2013](#)) findings, there is a positive relationship between the perception of injustice and deviant behavior, considering the moderating role of moral disengagement. Also, Ambrose ML, MA Seabright, (Schminke, 2002), confirmed the existence of a deep relationship between deviant behavior at work and the perception of injustice which they regard as the most prevalent cause.

A lot of scholars and researchers confirmed that organizational injustice is responded to by deviant behavior in the workplace ([Folger, 1993](#); [Greenberg, 1990](#); [Jermier, Knights & Nord, 1994](#); [Khattak et al., 2018](#)).

According to ([Khattak et al., 2018](#)). Employees' attitudes and behaviors are affected by their perceptions of unfair treatment in the workplace. In the last three decades, organizational justice researchers explored that the judgment of fairness may influence individuals' attitudes, for example, job satisfaction, intention to leave the organization, organizational commitment ([Folger & Konovsky, 1989](#); [Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995](#)), and also may influence the judgment of the legitimate power of authority figures in organization and their policies ([Huo et al., 1996](#)). On the other hand, researchers focusing on the behavioral outcomes of organizational justice explored that employees' performance deteriorates ([Lind, Kanfer & Earley, 1990](#)) they are more likely steal organizations' property, they are unwilling to display organizational citizenship behaviors ([Moorman, Niehoff & Organ, 1993](#)), they do not respect the decisions made by authority figures ([Huo YJ, et al. 1996](#)), they are likely to protest ([Vermunt et al., 1996](#)), and they have a higher tendency to take legal actions against their employers ([Bies & Tyler 1993](#); [Lind et al., 2000](#)) if they perceive that organizational outcomes and procedures are not just and based on equity.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is applied regarding its goal and quasi-experimental and based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods with regard to data collection, and it was carried out in the first half of 2019. The population

studied was all undergraduate students in the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Accounting of Yazd University. 117 students were tested through convenience sampling.

The subjects were told that they were supposed to sit for a dictation exam and find spelling mistakes. In fact, they were made to believe that they all could achieve the reward. Individuals entered the experiment environment, and each was given a code. The experiment environment included 8 tables on each of which were 6 pens. The tables were placed in such a way that they were not in the same line of sight. Participants were asked to sit at a table each, and only use that table to the end of the experiment, and find 15 spelling mistakes in a text in 4 minutes. They were also allowed to take any number of pens for themselves.

After the experiment finished and when the results were to be announced, the researcher manipulated justice. Manipulating justice according to Table 1 yielded 8 models, based on the fact that there are two modes of observance and one mode of lack of observance.

Table 1: Modes of manipulating the justice

Dimensions of justice	Mode 1	Mode 2	Mode 3	Mode 4	Mode 5	Mode 6	Mode 7	Mode 8
Distributive	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Procedural	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Interactional	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0

While respondents filled out the questionnaires, the researcher corrected the papers, and when individuals returned to receive feedback, the researcher manipulated justice for each individual according to Table 2 and based on the modes presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Manner of manipulating the justice

Types of justice	Modes of manipulating the justice
Distributive	1 You receive a reward as you have found more than 10 mistakes in the passage.
	0 You receive no reward, although you have found more than 10 mistakes in the passage.
Procedural	1 I spent time correcting your paper completely and meticulously.
	0 I only corrected one paragraph, not the whole of your paper.
Interactional	1 I appreciate your participation in this experiment, in spite of being busy.
	0 I don't care whether you receive a reward or not. I have more important things to do, and this work is just a waste of my time.

After giving feedback and manipulating justice, participants were asked to sit at their tables and answer three questions regarding the observance or lack of observance of the three kinds of justice toward themselves. In this phase, the researcher, while referring to the other groups' taking of the pens and their shortage, asked participants not to take any pens out of the room, and at the same time asked them to leave the papers and leave the room after the exam was finished. Then the researcher left the room on some pretext. Obviously, the participants' deviant behavior is shown by the number of pens they take. At the end of the experiment, the main goal was explained to the participants, the researcher apologized to them, and all of them received bonus marks.

Multicollinearity, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression tests in SPSS were used to analyze the data. It should be noted that as one of the ways to study the moderating role in multiple linear regression in SPSS is multiplying, the moderating variable and the independent variable together and entering them in the regression together, in order to study the moderating role of the tendency to moral disengagement, this variable and the variable of the perception of organizational injustice were multiplied together and were put into the regression.

For the purpose of measuring moral disengagement, Albert Bandura's questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was composed of 32 items, which were reduced to 24 items after studying experts' opinions. Also, the questionnaire which was used to measure perceived organizational justice was composed of 17 questions. A 5-point Likert scale, which is one of the most common measuring scales, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, was used to design the questionnaires.

To measure the content validity and the face validity of the questionnaires, 6 academic experts' opinions (faculty members in the department of commercial management), who are well-informed about the topic, were used, and the final form of the questionnaires were confirmed. Also, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaires. Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 are regarded as acceptable reliability, and this value is 0.771 in this study for the variable of moral disengagement.

Eventually, in order to measure deviant behavior, an experiment was designed and conducted in which 15 groups of 8 undergraduate management students, were selected. After 3 participants quit, the number of the sample was reduced to the final number 117 individuals. In the beginning, the participants were provided with a reason for the experiment so

that they would believe that the main purpose is not conducting an experiment. Also, they were told that they would be rewarded based on their performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the data analysis is presented in two levels descriptive and inferential. According to the collected data, 23.9 percent of the sample was men and 76.1 percent were women; all of whom were 20 to 25 years of age. Linear regression was used to test the hypotheses of the study due to their casual nature. For this purpose, first, the linearity of the variables, and then the distribution of the data were analyzed.

Multi collinearity shows the degree of correlation between the independent variables, and when this amount approaches zero, the model has high reliability (Habibpur & Safari, 2012). A tolerance between 0 and 1 shows the degree of multicollinearity between independent variables. Therefore, the higher the tolerance (closer to one), the higher the degree of multicollinearity, and vice versa. Also, if VIF is larger than 2, then there is higher multicollinearity. In this study, the multicollinearity among the variables of the perception of distributive, procedural, and interactional injustice and the tendency to moral disengagement were studied. According to the results, the tolerances for the said variables are 0.943, 0.943, 0.988, and 0.991 respectively, and the VIF is between 1.009 and 1.61. Therefore, all factors work independently of each other.

Normal or semi-normal distribution of the dependent variable data is one of the presuppositions of linear regression. If the distribution of the data is not normal, then a natural logarithm must be used for the regression (Habibpur & Safari, 2012). According to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, only the data related to deviant behavior at work, with a significant level of 0.00, do not follow the normal distribution.

Considering the lack of collinear relationship among the variables and also the distribution of the data, and in order to use linear regression to test the research hypotheses, the data related to perceived organizational justice, the tendency to moral engagement, and the natural logarithm of deviant behavior at work were utilized in SPSS. As it was mentioned earlier the purpose of the present study is to study the effect of perceived justice on displaying deviant behavior with the moderating role of the tendency to moral engagement. So, the following hypotheses were tested.

1. The perception of organizational injustice has a positive and significant effect on deviant behavior.
 - 1-1. The perception of distinctive injustice has a positive and significant effect on deviant behavior at work.
 - 1-2. The perception of procedural injustice has a positive and significant effect on deviant behavior at work.
 - 1-3. The perception of interactional injustice has a positive and significant effect on deviant behavior at work.
2. The tendency to moral disengagement moderates the relationship between the perception of organizational injustice and deviant behavior at work.

Based on the proposed research hypotheses, the research variables were tested in SPSS in pairs. As regression analysis should follow the correlation phase, first the correlation between the variables was examined using the Pearson Correlation test. Table 3 shows the existence or the lack of existence of a correlation between the variables and their strength.

Table 3: Summary of the statistics related to the fit of the model

Number	Hypothesis	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	The positive and significant effect of perceived organizational injustice on deviant behavior in the workplace	0.669	0.447	0.323
2	The effect of perceived organizational injustice on deviant behavior in the workplace through the tendency to moral disengagement	0.393	0.154	0.129
3	The positive and significant effect of perceived distributive injustice on deviant behavior in the workplace	0.480	0.230	0.232
4	The positive and significant effect of perceived procedural injustice on deviant behavior in the workplace	0.081	0.007	-0.009
5	The positive and significant effect of perceived interactional injustice on deviant behavior in the workplace	0.267	0.071	0.113

Based on the Pearson test results as presented in Table 3, the values of multiple correlation coefficients (R) is greater than zero for all of the hypotheses, and it confirms the existence of correlation among the variables of the study. The strength of these relationships is highest between perceived organizational injustice and deviant behavior (R = 0.669). Also, considering their adjusted R square of perceived organizational injustice and the aspects of distributive, procedural, and interactional injustice they account for, respectively, 32.2, 23.2, and 1.13 percent of deviant behavior. Also, the relationship between perceived organizational injustice and deviant behavior is moderated by 12.9 percent by the tendency to moral disengagement.

In general, the overall fit of the model was calculated using the ANOVA index the results indicate the significant levels of 0.002, 0.004, 0.001, 0.0049, and 0.044 for the components of perceived organizational injustice, the tendency to moral disengagement, and the aspects of distributive, procedural, and interactional injustice. This shows the high capability and fitness of the model to predict the emergence of organizational deviant behavior. Finally, coefficients of regression were used to examine the ability of the independent variable to predict the construct of organizational deviant behavior. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression coefficients

Hypotheses	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	sig	Status
		B	Error level	β			
Hypothesis 1	Fixed value	-0.161	0.262	-	-	0.525	Confirmed
	Perception of organizational injustice	0.273	0.084	0.396	3.277	0.002	
Hypothesis 2	Fixed value	-0.156	0.262	-	-	0.538	Confirmed
	Perception of organizational injustice	0.087	0.178	0.317	0.487	0.048	
	Perception of organizational injustice and moral disengagement	0.081	0.068	0.286	1.188	0.039	
Hypothesis 1-1	Fixed value	0.173	0.150	-	1.149	0.255	Confirmed
	Perception of distributive injustice	0.153	0.046	0.380	3.340	0.001	
Hypothesis 1-2	Fixed value	0.514	0.187	-	2.725	0.008	Rejected
	Perception of procedural injustice	0.042	0.063	0.081	0.658	0.513	
Hypothesis 1-3	Fixed value	0.417	0.166	-	2.509	0.015	Rejected
	Perception of interactional injustice	0.070	0.051	0.167	1.376	0.174	

Regression coefficients fall into two groups: unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β). Standardized β coefficients determine the relative strength of the effect of each individual independent variable on the changes of the dependent variable of deviant behavior. As it is presented in Table 4, the value of β for the variable of perceived organizational injustice equals 0.369 which is significant at the error level below 0.01. Therefore, the first hypothesis is supported and confirmed i.e. perceived organizational injustice has an effect on deviant behavior. This means that an increase in the standard deviation of the variable of perceived organizational injustice leads to an increase in the amount of deviant behavior which equals to 0.369 of standard deviation.

In Table 4, regression coefficients for the variables of perceived injustice and perceived injustice together with the tendency to moral disengagement is on the significant level of less than 0.05, which confirms that the relationship between perceived organizational injustice and deviant behavior at work is moderated by the tendency to moral disengagement. Therefore, the second hypothesis is supported by the results.

The value of the standardized regression coefficient equals 0.380 for the variable of perceived injustice, which is regarded as significant in the error level of 0.001. Therefore, the variable of perceived distributive injustice influences deviant organizational behavior; thus, hypothesis 1-1 is supported.

The values of β for the variables of perceived procedural injustice and perceived interactional injustice are 0.081 and 0.167 respectively, which are not significant as they are in the error level of higher than 0.05. Therefore, it is inferred that the variables of perceived procedural injustice and perceived interactional injustice have no effect on their exhibition of deviant behavior, and thus the second and third subordinate hypotheses, which suggested a positive and significant relationship between these aspects of perceived organizational justice and deviant behavior, are rejected.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to (Yen and HY Teng, 2013) extant literature found that culture has an effect on organizational citizenship behavior (Cohen, A. and A Avrahami, 2006) and deviant behavior at work (Jackson et al., 2006). Organizations are places where different kinds of behaviors most of which follow the norms of the organization are displayed. However, it is possible that, for some reasons, some behaviors violate the norms, in which case, they are called deviant behaviors (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). Anyone, who spends a long time in an organization, can see behavior that is

against established norms or behavior which is harmful to the organization. Organizational injustice functions as a job stressor and is related to employees' perceptions of unfair treatment in the workplace which results in negative emotions and subsequently transforms into deviant behavior ([Khattak, et al., 2018](#)).

Based on social exchange theory ([Blau, 1964](#)), perception directs attitudes, and attitudes direct individuals' behaviors. So, personal feelings, expectations, perceptions, and qualities can shape negative attitudes towards one's work and organization and as a result form one's behavior towards his or her organization ([Yildiz, et al., 2015](#)). This theory refers to the interaction between two individuals each of whom wishes to maximize his or her profit. There is always a struggle for profit maximization between management and employees in organizations. Thus, day-to-day interactions between managers and employees, sometimes, lead to actions that are regarded as injustice on the part of managers or the organization by employees ([Vaezi, Hoseynpoor & Ranjbar, 2016](#)). Since organizational justice, as one of the motivational factors, plays an important role in creating dissatisfaction, and in people's tendency to deviant behavior, the present study examines the effect of perceived organizational injustice on the construct of deviant behavior at work with the moderating role of the tendency to moral disengagement. [Hystad SW, Mearns JK, and J Eid. \(2013\)](#), in their studies, confirmed their positive and significant effect of perceived injustice on employees' exhibition of deviant behavior at work. ([Zribi & Souai, 2013](#)) also, believe that the perception of injustice in organizations is an effective factor in the violation of psychological contracts and employees' tendency to word counterproductive behavior. Also, ([Ambrose, Seabright & Schminke, 2002](#)), studied the role of perceived organizational injustice in acts of sabotage in the workplace and confirmed the deep relationship between acts of sabotage in the workplace and the perception of injustice which they are regarded as the most common reason.

Their findings are in line with the findings of the present study. If employees feel that they are not treated fairly, they may behave aggressively and hurt their colleagues and themselves. This leads to employees' poor performance, hence reduced organizational productivity. In other words, the presence of justice in organizations reduces the amount of deviant behavior.

The analysis of the data confirmed that moral disengagement moderates the relationship between perceived organizational injustice and deviant behavior at work, which is in line with the studies carried out by ([Hystad, Mearns, & J Eid, 2013; Fida, et al., 2014; Barsky, 2011; Samnani, Salamon, & Singh, 2014](#)), inferred from their studies that employees with more negative feelings, if strongly inclined to disregard ethics, are more strongly motivated to counterproductive behavior. Furthermore, ([Yildiz, et al., 2015](#)) confirmed that employee's negative thoughts, perceptions, and feelings lead to negative deviations through moral disengagement. Also, ([Moore, 2015](#)), in a study about employees' tendency to moral disengagement, considered eight cognitive mechanisms which cut their connection between one's intrinsic ethical standards and his or her behavior, and regarded moral disengagement as a factor that facilitates conducting immoral and unethical acts through decreasing one's feeling of distress. In other words, individuals' tendency to moral disengagement makes the behavior which is against existing norms seem unimportant by disregarding ethical standards and deactivating ethical self-affirmation and self-censure processes, and enables individuals to violate their ethical principles and codes without belittling or criticizing themselves ([Bandura, 2002](#)).

The present study shows that from among the aspects of perceived organizational injustice only the component of distributive injustice, with the Pearson coefficient of 0.480 and a β of 0.380, has a positive and significant effect on the construct of deviant behavior at work. In other words, when people perceive their earnings as unfair in comparison with their input, they display behavior that is against existing norms so that this perceived inconsistency is reduced. The results of the present study are in line with the results of the study conducted by ([McCardle 2007; Chernyak-Hai Tziner, 2014](#)) studied the relationship between counterproductive behavior at work and the perception of organizational justice, and confirmed the existence of a significant relationship between distributive justice and counterproductive behavior. According to them, the higher perception of distributive justice people have, the less counterproductive behavior they display.

([Yuan Chou, et al., 2013](#)) also inferred that the distributive aspect of the construct of organizational justice has a positive and significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior. According to Adams' Equity Theory, which focuses on their perceived justice based on the distributed rewards in an organization, individuals always assess themselves in society and in comparison with others. If they feel that they are treated unfairly, they are provoked to promote justice among themselves. Therefore, they take measures to decrease this internal tenseness. The most important measure they take is the tendency to do things that are against organizational norms.

CONCLUSION

With regard to the relationship between perceived procedural injustice and the phenomenon of deviant behavior in organizations, the findings of this study show a lack of positive and significant relationship between the two, which is in line with the study conducted by [De Lara PZM. \(2007\)](#), but in contradiction to [Hystad, Mearns & Eid \(2013\)](#) studies. With regard to procedural justice, its relationship with the performance is not certain; it, however, has an effect on attitudes and the quality of working life ([Hoseinzadeh & Naseri, 2006](#)). Procedural justice refers to individuals' perception of the fairness of the existing procedures to make decisions about compensating the services, not the real distribution of revenues. Therefore, it is possible that the participants in the present study did not understand procedural

justice correctly, and it resulted in the rejection of the hypothesis. In the end, considering the role of the tendency to psychological disengagement, which was evaluated lower than the medium according to the findings of this study, the participants' resistance to display deviant behavior is justifiable, and can be regarded as proof of the confirmation of the second hypothesis.

In addition to the above-mentioned points, considering Cognitive Theory, it is possible to mention the interactional effects of the aspects of perceived justice on employees' disruptive behavior. Based on this theory, individuals' perception of each of the aspects of distributive, procedural, or interactional justice is actually cognition to which people refer when making decisions about their behavior. This referring to their cognition assumes an interactional and multidimensional nature. This means that people do not react immediately if one of the aspects of Justice is diminished, but they first refer to other aspects, and if the other aspects have been violated as well, then they may display disruptive and retaliatory behavior. If, after they are denied the procedural justice, they refer to the rules of distributive and interactional justice, and they come to the conclusion that these two were followed, they rarely display disruptive behavior on the account of procedural injustice (Golparvar, Semsar & Atashpour, 2012). Since, in the experiment, most of the people succeeded in receiving the promised reward, and although they were denied procedural justice, they didn't exhibit any deviant behavior, in a spite of their perception of procedural injustice because they had achieved the outcome of their work. So, this hypothesis was rejected.

The findings of this study show that perceived interactional injustice does not have a significant effect on deviant behavior in organizations, either, which was expected considering the moderating role of moral disengagement. However, these findings are not in line with the studies conducted by (Holtz & Harold, 2009). As it was mentioned earlier people do not show a strong tendency to exhibiting deviant behavior just by perceiving injustice in one of the aspects of justice. They first refer to other aspects, and if they see that justice is followed in those aspects, they do not take pernicious measures just because of perceived interactional injustice. Also, it is possible that the participants in the experiment did not understand interactional justice correctly, or interpreted their disrespectful behavior to which they were exposed differently, and thus, they did not consider it as disrespectful.

It should be noted that as individuals' basic needs (e.g. food, clothes, housing, sexual needs, etc.) are satisfied in developed societies, they pay more attention to secondary needs (the need for affection, respect, competition, etc.). However in societies that are not developed, the basic needs are not satisfied, so most people pay attention to these needs. Therefore, as people's basic needs have not been satisfied enough in our society, people are particularly sensitive to their income and fringe benefits. As a result, their perception of the degree distributive justice had been followed influenced their performance (Haghighi, Ahmadi & Ramin, 2010). Thus, people are less sensitive to perceived interactional injustice. Consequently, people are less provoked to display deviant behavior because of perceiving interactional injustice.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Selecting and examining larger samples can help in analyzing more comprehensive results.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Mehdi Sabokro, Mehrdad Tavakoli, Milad Mohebbi Malmiri.

M.S; collected the information, M.T; analyzed the data, M.M.M; wrote the paper.

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