



COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR AND BELIEF IN JUST WORLD AMONG PARAMEDICAL STAFF: ROLE OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

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Abstract

Organizational justice is a widely studied phenomenon and it has a long-lasting effect on the productivity of an organization it plays an important role in altering the behavior of employees in the interest of the organization. The proposed study aims to examine the relationship between belief in a just world and counterproductive work behavior and the role of organizational justice among paramedical staff. The study used a cross-sectional research design. Data was collected from a sample of 150 paramedical staff including men ($n=75$) and women ($n=75$). Belief in just was measured with a personal belief in just world scale by Dalbert (1999), organizational justice with organizational justice scale by Neihoff and Moorman (1993) and counterproductive work behavior was measured with a counterproductive checklist developed by Spector, et al., (2006). Findings indicate that counterproductive work behavior is significantly predicted by belief in a just world and procedural justice. Results revealed that procedural justice will mediate between belief in a just world and counterproductive work behavior. This study has implications in organizational settings. Suggestions are given for future studies in this respect.

Keywords: Belief in a just world, counterproductive work behavior, organizational justice, paramedical staff

Introduction:

There are so many beliefs of justice-driven reactions which differentiate one from others. The most famous amongst them is the belief in a just world hypothesis by Lerner (1965). There are huge differences in the perception of fairness of employees in different organizations. People from different countries and cultures have different beliefs regarding their perception of fairness (Benabou & Tirole, 2006). But there is a universal tendency of belief among most people to believe that people get what they deserve and the world is a just place, this is called belief in a just world and described by Lerner (1980). According to most of the studies when people are treated fairly by their external world they are more motivated to believe in a just world (Dalbert & Sallay, 2004). The behaviors that result when an individual encounters an unjust situation could be better explained by the esteem threat model which is one of the famous social psychological models (Ferris,

Spence, Brown, & Heller, 2012). For example, individual gets poor marks despite his utmost hard work this would surely lower his self-esteem level and he will be involved in deviant behavior that would be against the benefit and welfare of his organization. His act would try to validate his self-esteem either he has to do good or bad deeds (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). These deviant behaviors are called counterproductive work behavior and could be defined as any volitional acts by employees that potentially violate the legal interests of, or do harm to, an organization or its owners (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Inconsistency in belief in a just world would harm employees in the form of counterproductive productive work behavior. These anti-organizational behaviors would be targeted toward the organization or person. However, these behaviors are of five types sabotage, withdrawal, production, deviance abuse, and theft; some of them are harmful to colleagues and some are not in the favor of organization (Cochran, 2014).

Dalbert (1999) argued that people's personal belief in the just world is more strong than their general belief in the just world so personal belief in the just world is more related to their actions in the real world. Therefore, employees with a low personal belief in a just world are more involved in sabotage, theft, and increased withdrawal (Ocel & Aydin, 2010). Whereas research indicates that the perception of injustice at work is the most obvious cause of counterproductive work behavior among employees (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002). It can be justified by an example that if two employees compete on a position and it is given to that person who is not very hard worker than his competitor, this injustice would lead the employee to use unfair ways to gain things which he desires and ultimately lead him to counterproductive work behavior (Cochran, 2012).

The stressors emotion model provides the explanations of causes behind counterproductive work behavior. It states that counterproductive work behavior is the result of a combination of individual characteristics and organizational factors. Individual characteristics might be the personal beliefs and personality type of the individual. While organizational factors could be unfair reward allocation, counterproductive work behavior would be the combination of personal beliefs and unfair treatment (Yu, 2014). Previous studies revealed that there is a negative relationship between procedural justice and counterproductive work behavior among employees. When the employees are not involved in the decision-making procedure and they are not given importance in any planning. They tend to feel injustice and they become less concerned with the betterment of their organization and their interpersonal relationship with their colleagues would also be disturbed (Sabahi, et al., 2020).

Counterproductive work behavior could be defined as behaviors that are against the betterment of an organization; that could hurt the organization and all the behaviors are intentional. These counterproductive work behaviors can be at an interpersonal level like between colleagues and can be a potential threat to their organizations (Spector & Fox, 2015). Another study by Ocel and Aydin (2012) suggests that when individuals are confronted with an event that threatens their notion that the world is a just place they are more prone to sabotage, abuse deviance, and theft-like behaviors. Landeweerd and Borman (2021) found that nurses who had a low preference for job autonomy had higher absenteeism. Absenteeism is also a counterproductive work behavior because it is against the rules of an organization.

The present study attempted to investigate the relationship between personal belief in just and counterproductive work behavior and; the role of Procedural justice among paramedical staff. The study aimed to examine the following formulated hypotheses.

Hypothesis

By reviewing extensive literature following hypotheses were made.

1. Procedural justice and belief in a just world would have a positive correlation whereas counterproductive work behavior negatively correlates with belief in a just world and procedural justice.
2. Counterproductive work behavior would be negatively predicted by Procedural justice and belief in a just world.

3. Procedural justice would mediate the relationship between counterproductive work behavior and belief in a just world.

Method

Sample

The sample was selected through a convenient sampling technique. The sample (N = 150) consisted of paramedical staff and was further categorized among men (n = 75) and women (n = 75). It was ensured to participants that information provided by them would be kept confidential and for this purpose informed consent was taken from them.

Instruments

The proposed study used measures having good psychometric properties and already used in most of the research. Moreover, Urdu-translated scales were used so that these could be easily understandable for the selected sample. Experts of native language validate these scales by checking the relevance of backward translated versions with their original versions.

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB- C 32). Counterproductive work behaviors are measured with the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB- C 32) revised by Spector, et al., (2006). Counterproductive work behavior checklist contains five factors including sabotage (items 1 to 3), withdrawal (items 4 to 7), production deviance (items 8 to 10), theft (items 11 to 15), and abuse (items 16 to 32). All items could be responded to on a 7-point Likert scale where 0= never, 1 = once a year, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = once a month, 4 = a few times a month, 5 = once a week, and 6 = every day. Respondents are asked to indicate the frequency of behaviors that occurred high scores on the scales represent a high level of CWB and low scores indicate a low level of CWB among employees. Reliability coefficients for total scales and Sabotage, Withdrawal, Production Deviance, theft, and abuse are .90, .81, .61, .42 .58, and .63 respectively (Spector, et al., 2006).

Belief in Just World Scale (BJWS). Belief in a just world scale is developed by Dalbert (1999). This scale comprises 7 items on personal belief in a just world and 6 items on general belief in a just world. All the items are positively scored. The scale is based on a 5-point Likert-type response pattern. The response categories range from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. High scores indicate a high level of belief in a just world and low scores indicate a lower level of belief in a just world.

Organization Justice Scale (OJS). Perceptions of organizational justice were measured by using 6 items of the procedural justice scale subscale of the organization heuristic scale, developed by Neihoff and Moorman (1993). Respondents will indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each item on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale is widely used in most of the studies and shows satisfactory reliability and validity (Al-Zu'bi, 2010). The proposed study used a translated version of this subscale in Urdu language and then applied it to the sample.

Procedure

Participants in the present study were contacted personally. Before administering the scales personal information was obtained through the demographic sheet and the confidentiality of their information would be ensured to them. They were briefed about the nature and objectives of the study. They were provided with detailed guidelines regarding the response format and how they would have to complete the questionnaires. There was no time limit for the completion of scales and participants were requested to give their responses honestly and openly. All participants were selected based on their convenience. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no incentive was offered to participants. In the end, the participants of the study were thanked for their cooperation and support in the study.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Psychometric Properties and Reliability of Study Variables (N = 150)

Variables	N	M	SD	Range	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
Procedural justice	150	21.73	4.68	6-29	.72	-.62	.04
Belief in just world	150	22.37	4.62	8-32	.81	-.73	.40
Counterproductive work behavior	150	16.14	13.0	0-55	.82	.96	.23

Table 1 shows the psychometric properties of the study variables. Reliability analysis indicates the reliability coefficient of the organizational justice scale, belief in just world scale, and counterproductive work behavior checklist is .72, .81, and .82 respectively, which shows satisfactory internal consistency. The value of skewness and kurtosis for procedural justice, belief in a just world, and counterproductive work behavior is less than 1 which indicates that univariate normality is not problematic.

Table 2: Correlation among Study Variables (N= 150)

Variables	1.	2.	3.
1. Procedural justice	-	.50***	-.23**
2. Belief in just world		-	-.17*
3. Counterproductive work behavior			-

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation among the present study variables. The findings indicate that procedural justice has a significant positive correlation with belief in a just world ($r = .50$, $p < .001$). Results indicate that counterproductive work behavior has a significant negative correlation with procedural justice ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$) and belief in a just world ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$).

Table 3: Predictors of Counterproductive Work Behavior (N= 150)

Predictor variables	β	SEB	β	R^2
Procedural justice	-.66	.22	-.23**	.05
Belief in just world	-.48	.22	-.17*	.03

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 shows linear regression analysis indicating that counterproductive work behavior is significantly predicted by organizational justice and belief in a just world. Such as organizational justice negatively predicts ($\beta = -.66$, $t = -2.97$, $p < .01$) and explained 5% variance in counterproductive work behavior $\{R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 149) = 8.81$, $p < .01\}$. Findings reveal that belief in a just world is a significant negative predictor of counterproductive work behavior ($\beta = -.48$, $t = -2.13$, $p < .05$) and explains 3% variance in job satisfaction $\{R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 149) = 4.53$, $p < .05\}$.

Table 4: Procedural Justice as a Mediator among Belief in Just World and Counterproductive Work Behavior (N = 150)

Outcome	Predictors	Direct Effect			Indirect Effect		
		β	95% CI		β	95% CI	
			LL	UL		LL	UL
Procedural justices Counterproductive behavior	Belief in just world	.50***	.36	.65			
	Procedural justice	-.55*	-1.02	-.05	-.28*	-.004	.080
	Belief in just world	-.20*	-.71	.33			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4 summarizes the findings of mediation analysis conducted through PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) for testing the proposed model of counterproductive work behavior. Model 4 was specified in the PROCESS macro for SPSS. As per Barron and Kenny’s (1986) approach, belief in a just world (independent variable) predicted counterproductive work behavior (dependent variable, $\beta = -.20, p < .05$) and explained about 6% variance which was statistically significant ($R^2 = .06, F(2, 147) = 4.69, p < .05$). Belief in just world predicted Procedural justice (mediator, $\beta = .50, p < .001$), and Procedural justice predicted counterproductive work behavior ($\beta = -.55, p < .05$), both the independent variable (belief in just world) and the mediator (organizational justice) explained 25% variance in counterproductive work behavior, which was statistically significant ($R^2 = .25, F(2, 147) = 49.96, p < .05$). It may be inferred that procedural justice partially mediated between belief in just world and counterproductive work behavior. This mediation effect was further ascertained as the indirect effect of belief in a just world on counterproductive work behavior through organizational justice was significant (Sobel’s $Z = -2.06, p < .05$) and its 95% confidence interval did not contain zero. The statistical diagram of mediation is presented below along with significant path coefficients.

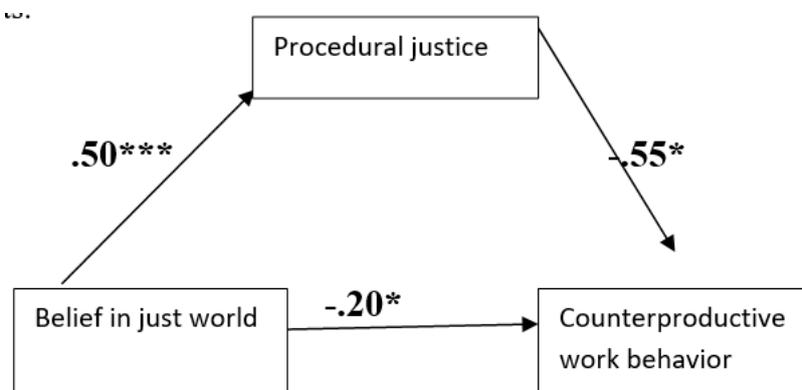


Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Values for Male and Female of Paramedical Staff on Counterproductive Work Behavior , Belief in Just World and Procedural justice (N = 150)

Variables	Male (n = 75)		Female (n = 75)		t(148)	p	95% CI		Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
CWB	21.56	4.66	21.91	4.71	-.45	.65	-1.86	1.16	.03
BJW	22.04	4.80	22.69	4.44	-.86	.38	-2.14	.84	.07
PJ	16.53	13.06	15.75	13.01	.36	.71	-3.42	4.99	.02

Note. CWB = Counter product Work Behavior; BJW= Belief in Just World; PJ = Procedural Justice

Table 5 shows mean, standard deviation, and t-values for male and female Paramedical Staff on Counterproductive Work Behavior, Belief in a Just World, and Procedural Justice. Results indicate non-significant mean differences among Paramedical Staff on Counterproductive Work Behavior, Belief in a Just World, and Procedural Justice with $t(148) = -.45, -.86 \& .36 p > .05$.

Discussion

The present study anticipated to examine the relationship between belief in a just world and counterproductive work behavior and the role of Procedural justice among paramedical staff. The first hypothesis of the present study concluded that there is a positive relationship between organizational justice and belief in a just world. When people are fairly treated at their work and in the overall world this would also enhance and strengthen their belief that the world is overall a just place and their good deeds are rewarded at the end. The results of the present study are in line with a study conducted by Lo (2008) which also indicates a positive relationship that would validate their belief in a just world if they are fairly treated.

The present study includes the second hypothesis which states that counterproductive work behavior is negatively predicted by organizational justice and belief in a just world. Results of the present study are also consistent with the hypothesis and revealed that when there is unfair treatment of management with their employees, they tend to show deviant behavior, sabotage, and theft at work. Khan (2013) conducted a study and investigated that when management is unjust and unfair in raising the salary of employees they would intentionally harm their organization by not following the instructions of their manager. In just method are potential sources of theft and sabotage of colleagues. Employees who have a low belief in a just world are inclined more towards counterproductive work behavior; when they perceive unfair treatment within their organization they will try to violate the rules of their organization and try to get what they do not deserve by unfair means.

The current study hypothesized organizational justice would mediate between belief in a just world and counterproductive work behavior. Findings examined that organizational justice is a significant mediator among the variables and it shows full mediation. It could be justified as employees have a strong belief that they would be rewarded or punished at the end for their actions. This could be also concluded that it is a consistent belief as a proverb which states tit for tat. When this belief is strongly held people would surely avoid harming others or their organization. Because they would be fear of the earnings of their deeds and they would be responsible for paying back for their wrongdoings. When people encounter fair treatment and have equal chances of success and progress this would ultimately strengthen their just world belief up to greater times. Providing both of the conditions will surely prevent employees to involved in destructive behaviors which would not only lead them toward success but also would be in the interest of their organization. It indicates how Organizational justice along with belief in a just world is fruitful in overcoming the deviant behaviors of employees.

A study conducted by Fox, Spector, and Miles (2001) conducted a study and argued that job stress acts as a mediator between organizational injustice and counterproductive work behavior. When employees are facing stress at the job along with injustice managerial conditions they tend to do things that would be harmful for their organization and for their coworkers also just to prove that they have authority and can do something against their organization.

Conclusion

The present study would provide important information in organizational settings to raise the productivity of their organization. The results of this study would strengthen their just world belief and would help keep them fair in their dealings and concentrating on their work. This would be an informative study for different organizations to take necessary measures to make their policies fair for all employees. This would ultimately reduce the behaviors that are against the betterment of an organization. The findings of the study provide insight into the importance of just belief in overcoming counterproductive work behavior. However, the present study includes only paramedical staff which is not generalized to employees of other organizations so it is suggested to expand the investigation of study variables across different samples. It is also suggested to include analysis of different demographic variables

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