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Investigating justice and bullying among healthcare workers

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Medina-Craven, Michele N. and Ostermeier, Kathryn, "Investigating justice and bullying among healthcare workers" (2020). *Management Department Journal Articles*. Paper 71.
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Investigating Justice and Bullying among Healthcare Workers

Journal:	<i>Employee Relations</i>
Manuscript ID	ER-04-2019-0195.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Healthcare, Workplace Bullying, Organizational Justice, Intentions to Leave

Investigating Justice and Bullying among Healthcare Workers

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationships between workplace bullying, organizational justice dimensions, and intentions to leave. We posit that workplace bullying is positively related to intentions to leave and that this effect is transmitted through lower justice perceptions.

Design/methodology/approach: We surveyed 146 healthcare workers, using factor analysis and the Preacher and Hayes (2008) PROCESS macro to test our hypotheses.

Findings: Our results indicate that workplace bullying is positively associated with intentions to leave. This effect is transmitted through lower entity-based distributive justice perceptions.

Research limitations: Our sample was cross-sectional and collected at a single point in time. Future research should examine these relationships in a longitudinal method.

Practical implications: Our results suggest that when a healthcare worker experiences bullying in the workplace, they begin to perceive their organization as more unfair. These negative feelings toward their organization lead to a desire to permanently separate from the organization. These results suggest that workplace bullying has serious ramifications for turnover and that health-care organizations can mitigate these negative effects by increasing perceptions of organizational justice through being transparent about their decisions and the process going into this decision-making.

Originality/value: These findings extend existing research by empirically testing the effects of workplace bullying on intentions to leave within the healthcare industry.

Keywords: Healthcare, Intentions to leave, Organizational justice, Workplace bullying

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

Why people leave their organizations has been an area of research interest for decades (e.g., Griffeth *et al.*, 2000; Meisler, 2013). As a result, researchers ~~have~~ explored the ways in which different factors encourage people to remain with their organizations, including job satisfaction (e.g., Coomber and Barriball, 2007), organizational commitment (e.g., Liou and Cheng, 2010; Loi *et al.*, 2006), and personality characteristics (e.g., Meeusen *et al.*, 2011).

While there ~~are several studies is much research~~ documenting why people stay and go across different industries, the healthcare industry is unique in that the turnover costs can be extraordinarily high (Liou, 2009), as many ~~plaees-organizations~~ face shortages of doctors and nurses (e.g., Buerhaus *et al.*, 2007). In fact, research indicates that about 30-50% of all new nurses decide to change positions or leave the field entirely within the first three years (Aiken *et al.*, 2002; Cipriano, 2006). In the midst of the shortage of healthcare workers, recent research has indicated that employees leave organizations due to their experiences with their managers and coworkers (Reina *et al.*, 2018). Bullying has been documented as increasing problem in the workplace (Zapf *et al.*, 2011) and, within the healthcare industry, this problem is more salient as bullying tends to occur more frequently in healthcare than in other industries (Dellasega, 2009; Lever *et al.*, 2019).

While some researchers ~~hasve~~ explored why healthcare workers intend to leave the field, with some citing healthcare reform (Ostermeier and Camp, 2016; Sofranec, 2012), working conditions (Liou and Cheng, 2010), and leadership issues (Coomber and Barriball, 2007; Larrabee *et al.*, 2003), we argue that a promising avenue for exploring why so many patient-facing healthcare workers opt out of the industry is workplace treatment. The healthcare industry is rife with criticism about the work environment, such as job dissatisfaction and burnout

(Nantsupawat *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, in this study we explore how workplace bullying leads to a decrease in perceptions of organizational justice and subsequently increases the desire to depart the organization. To explore these relationships, we use both fairness heuristics theory and affective events theory.

Fairness heuristics theory suggests that people use fairness judgments as a heuristic to guide their decisions about the extent to which they should invest or contribute in an exchange relationship (Lind, 1995a, 1995b, 1999; Van den Bos *et al.*, 2001). A central tenet of fairness heuristics theory involves focusing specifically on how subjective beliefs about organizational fairness drives key workplace attitudes and behaviors (Proudfoot and Lind, 2015). Furthermore, fairness heuristics theory posits that different types of justice experiences are cognitively integrated to form an overall global judgment of organizational fairness, which, in turn, influences employees' workplace attitudes and behaviors (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009; Proudfoot and Lind, 2015). Affective events theory (AET) suggests that work-related processes may elicit both positive and negative affective reactions in employees (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). In other words, when an individual experiences workplace bullying, this triggers a negative affective reaction. These two theories have been used to investigate employees' reactions to high stakes testing (McCarthy *et al.*, 2009), justice perceptions (Colquitt and Zipay, 2015), and organizational change (Matheny and Smollan, 2005). According to fairness heuristics theory, employees are relying on "quick and unconscious judgments" about a situation (Colquitt and Zipay, 2015, p. 83). Together, these two theories help us understand how an individual determines whether an event was just or unjust. Previous research demonstrates that "fairness is likely to be influenced by employees' affective states" (Colquitt and Zipay, 2015, p. 84). That is, once a worker has experienced a negative event, such as bullying, their affective

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3 state may change, resulting in their perception of the fairness within organization changing.
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5 Consequently, we argue that when healthcare workers experience bullying in their workplace,
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7 they will begin to view their organization more negatively (as more unfair through lower
8
9 perceptions of organizational justice) and want to invest less in the relationship, potentially
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11 deciding to separate permanently from the organization. We further discuss the influence of these
12
13 theories in the next section.
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15

16 17 **Background and Hypotheses**

18 19 **Organizational Justice and the Entity Paradigm**

20
21 Within the justice literature, two paradigms have emerged: reactive/event and entity. The
22
23 reactive/event paradigm's abiding concern is with how people react to specific occurrences that
24
25 occur within the work environment (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2001). Some of the most influential and
26
27 classic justice literature is grounded in this approach (i.e., Bies and Shapiro, 1987, 1988; Folger
28
29 *et al.*, 1983; Lind and Lissak, 1985; Thibaut and Walker, 1975). Much of the work in this
30
31 paradigm is defined by the fact that research participants are responding to a single event, or a
32
33 closely-related cluster of events (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2001), including pay cuts (Greenberg, 1990),
34
35 workplace staffing systems (Gilliland, 1994), selection decisions (Bauer *et al.*, 1998), and
36
37 leadership and trust in teams (Liu *et al.*, 2014).
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42 Alternatively, the entity paradigm of justice involves research participants appraising
43
44 some person (e.g., one's supervisor), group, or the organization as a whole (Cropanzano *et al.*,
45
46 2001). The principal concern of this paradigm is with how people navigate interpersonal
47
48 relationships with fair and unfair social entities (Cropanzano and Byrne, 2000), and that
49
50 respondents are judging the fairness of people or groups over time and/or across situations
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52 (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, Whitman *et al.* (2012) noted the lack of studies that
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2
3 focused on “overall” justice (i.e., entity) and reemphasized the call made by Ambrose and
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5 Schminke (2001, 2009) that more studies need to explore the effects of “overall” justice to
6
7 increase the explanatory power of the construct. We address this call by focusing on “overall”
8
9 organizational justice in our study. There are four types of justice: distributive, procedural,
10
11 informational, and interpersonal (Colquitt, 2001). In this study, we focus on two types of justice
12
13 that we contend are the most salient in the context of overall organizational justice assessments:
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15 distributive justice and procedural justice.
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17

18
19 Distributive justice is concerned with the perceived fairness of outcomes (Colquitt, 2001;
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21 Leventhal, 1980). Prior to 1975, the study of justice primarily focused on distributive justice,
22
23 with much of the original research derived from initial work by Adams (1965), who used a social
24
25 exchange theory framework to evaluate fairness. Researchers explored the relationship between
26
27 distributive justice and several organizational aspects, including organizational commitment
28
29 (Chang, 2002; Wayne *et al.*, 2002), perceived organizational support (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013; Loi *et*
30
31 *al.*, 2006), organizational citizenship behaviors (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010),
32
33 and compensation and benefits programs (Choi and Chen, 2007; Cole and Flint, 2004).
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37
38 Thibaut and Walker (1975) introduced the study of process to the literature on justice.
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40 Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of decision-making processes and the degree to
41
42 which these processes are consistent, accurate, unbiased, and open to voice and input (Leventhal,
43
44 1980; Thibaut and Walker, 1975). That is, procedural justice is considered to exist when
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46 procedures embody certain types of normatively accepted principles (Cohen-Charash and
47
48 Spector, 2001). Leventhal and colleagues can be credited for extending the notion of procedural
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50 justice into organizational settings, thus broadening the breadth of determinants of procedural
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52 justice beyond the concept of process control (Leventhal, 1980; Leventhal *et al.*, 1980).
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Organizational Justice & Healthcare

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3 Researchers identified links between procedural justice and several dimensions, including trust
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5 (Hough *et al.*, 2010; Konovsky and Pugh, 1994), organizational commitment (Paré and
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7 Tremblay, 2007; Wayne *et al.*, 2002), organizational citizenship behaviors (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013),
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9 and power (Aquino *et al.*, 2006).
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Organizational Justice and Healthcare

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14
15 Organizational justice has also been specifically studied within the healthcare industry, as
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17 the industry has recently been a focus of research, especially in the context of hospital-based care
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19 (Mohamed, 2014). Holistically, research shows that organizational justice is particularly
20
21 important in the healthcare industry. For example, perceptions of organizational justice have
22
23 been linked to perceptions of quality performance (Mohamed, 2014), engagement in
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25 organizational citizenship behaviors (Demirkiran *et al.*, 2016), the quality of work life for nurses
26
27 (Gillet *et al.*, 2013), and even to the physical and mental health of healthcare workers (Elovainio
28
29 *et al.*, 2003). Given the importance of organizational justice in general, and healthcare in
30
31 particular, it is important to understand what might lower perceptions of organizational justice
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33 for employees. We argue that when a healthcare worker experiences workplace bullying, their
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35 perceptions of organizational justice will decrease.
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Workplace Bullying

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42 Workplace bullying, also known as *mobbing*, *ganging up on someone*, or *psychological*
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44 *terror*, involves “hostile and unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by
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46 one or a few individuals mainly toward one individual” (Leymann, 1990, p. 120). Furthermore,
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48 these bullying activities occur frequently (at least once a week) and over a long period of time (at
49
50 least six months; Leymann, 1996). This definition of bullying specifically excludes temporary
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52 conflicts and focuses on a time when the psychosocial situation results in psychiatrically or
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3 psychosomatically pathological conditions. In other words, the difference between “conflict”
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5 and “bullying” is not referring to *what* or *how* it is done, but on the *frequency* and *duration* of
6
7 what is done (Leymann, 1996). ~~Moreover, several researchers (e.g., Power *et al.*, 2013; Zapf and
8
9 Einarsen, 2005) suggest that there must be a distance of power, which makes it difficult for
10
11 targets to defend themselves from the bullying behavior(s). Supervisory bullying is derived from
12
13 studies on abusive supervision (e.g., Tepper, 2000, 2007), social undermining (e.g., Duffy *et al.*,
14
15 2002; Hersheovis, 2011), and petty tyranny by supervisors (e.g., Ashforth, 1997; Kant *et al.*,
16
17 2013). Studies suggest that, overall, supervisory bullying is more damaging than co-worker
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19 bullying (Fox and Stallworth, 2005).~~

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23
24 There are several consequences of bullying both to the individual and the organization.
25
26 Bullied individuals can experience numerous effects on physical and mental health along a
27
28 continuum ranging from increased risk of cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression
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30 (Kivimaki *et al.*, 2003) to post-traumatic stress disorder (Leymann, 1990; Leymann and
31
32 Gustafsson, 1996), and in extreme cases, suicide (Leymann, 1996). With the negative outcomes
33
34 associated with bullying so severe, we argue that – in line with both AET theory and fairness
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36 heuristics theory – workplace bullying will increase negative feelings toward the organization
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38 and decrease the perception that the organizational environment is fair, as this treatment was
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40 allowed to occur in the organizational environment.

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45 *Hypothesis 1(a): Workplace bullying is negatively related to entity-based distributive*
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47 *justice perceptions.*

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52 *Hypothesis 1(b): Workplace bullying is negatively related to entity-based procedural*
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54 *justice perceptions.*

Intentions to Leave

Intentions to leave, also referred to as turnover intentions, is defined as an employee's estimated probability of leaving their organization (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986). Because of the high cost of turnover, especially in healthcare (Waldman *et al.*, 2004), organizations seek to reduce it, especially for its high performing or difficult to replace employees. In fact, [some evidence suggests that turnover is a consequence of workplace bullying](#) along with high absenteeism, higher production costs, increased abusive supervision, and lack of personnel motivation; [some evidence suggests that turnover is a consequence of workplace bullying](#) (Leymann, 1996; Samnani and Singh, 2012). Additionally, within the healthcare industry, a recent review by Lever *et al.* (2019) suggested that those healthcare staff who experienced bullying were more likely to have both negative mental and physical health consequences, in addition to increased absenteeism. Moreover, Hogh *et al.* (2011), who conducted a three-wave study among Danish healthcare workers and found that healthcare workers would leave if they experienced bullying. Building on this research, we likewise propose that workplace bullying leads to intentions to leave.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace bullying is positively related to intentions to leave.

Additionally, integrating both AET and fairness heuristics theory, we argue that the effects of workplace bullying are transmitted to intentions to leave via decreased organizational justice perceptions, as the experience of being bullied will result in negative affective states that will cause the employee to perceive less fairness and, ultimately, the bullied employees will seek to leave the organization. Moreover, as noted previously, justice perceptions do influence employee attitudes and behaviors (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009; Proudfoot and Lind, 2015). These attitudes and behaviors can lead to an employee intending to leave or stay with the

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3 organization (Chang *et al.*, 2013; Parry, 2008; Wagner, 2007). Furthermore, previous research
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5 demonstrates that there is a significant, negative relationship between both distributive and
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7 procedural justice (event-based) perceptions (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010; Paré and Tremblay,
8
9 2010) and turnover intentions. This research suggests that there will also be a negative
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11 relationship between entity-based distributive and procedural justice dimensions and intentions
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13 to leave.
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17 *Hypothesis 3(a): Entity-based distributive justice perceptions are negatively related to*
18
19 *intentions to leave.*

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21 *Hypothesis 3(b): Entity-based distributive procedural perceptions are negatively related*
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23 *to intentions to leave.*

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26 Additionally, we propose that both justice dimensions will partially mediate the
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28 relationship between workplace bullying and intentions to leave. Specifically, we theorize that
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30 when an individual experiences workplace bullying, they are more likely to perceive their
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32 organization as unjust and view their situation as untenable, increasing their desire to leave the
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34 organization.
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38 *Hypothesis 4(a): Entity-based distributive justice perceptions partially mediates the*
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40 *relationship between workplace bullying and intentions to leave.*

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42 *Hypothesis 4(b): Entity-based procedural justice perceptions partially mediates the*
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44 *relationship between workplace bullying and intentions to leave.*

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46
47 A visual representation of the model with the hypotheses can be found in Figure 1.

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49 [Insert Figure 1 about here]
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Method

Participants and Procedure

The data set includes responses from full-time healthcare professionals enrolled in an online university healthcare MBA program in the United States. The MBA students must have significant healthcare experience as a condition of admission to the program and students come from all over the United States to participate. Overall, the survey was made available to 300 students, with 227 students responding (approximately 75% response rate). Of those who responded, 81 were eliminated for not completing the survey in its entirety. After eliminating these respondents, the final sample size was 146 ($n = 146$). Given the nature of this study, we argue that this is an appropriate sample size to test the hypotheses. This is supported by analysis of the statistical power of our study, which indicated that power is above 0.80, indicating a low likelihood of making a Type II error (Cohen, 1992). Participants were asked to provide both personal and professional demographic information for the purposes of our study. Participants were 69% female, and the ethnic breakdown was as follows: 52% Caucasian, 25% Black, 11% Asian, 11% Hispanic or Latino, and 2% other. Participant ages ranged from 21 to 59, with an average age of 35.97 ($SD = 9.02$) and held positions such as Physician, Physician Assistant, and Nurse.

Measures

Entity-Based Distributive Justice Perceptions. We used Moorman's (1991) entity-based, four-item distributive justice scale. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.88. The scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A sample item for the distributive justice measure is "Fairly rewarded for the amount of effort you have put in."

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3 **Entity-Based Procedural Justice Perceptions.** We used Rupp and Cropanzano's (2002)
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5 entity-based, three-item procedural justice scale. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.78. The scale was
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7 measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A sample
8
9 item for procedural justice measure is "The organization's procedures and guidelines are very
10
11 fair."
12
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14 **Workplace Bullying.** This construct was measured using 14 items from the Fox and
15
16 Stallworth (2005) scale, with respondents indicating the frequency with which they experienced
17
18 certain behaviors by either their supervisors or co-workers. This scale is measured on a 5-point
19
20 Likert scale ranging from *never* to *extremely often*. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.93
21
22 and a sample item includes "Demeaned you in front of co-workers or clients."
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24
25

26 **Intentions to Leave.** This construct was measured using Colarelli's (1984) 3-item
27
28 measure. This scale was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree*
29
30 to *strongly agree*. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.83 and a sample item includes "I
31
32 frequently think of quitting my job."
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35 **Controls.** We controlled for age, gender, and ethnicity as previous research indicates that
36
37 these factors may be related to working conditions (Melamed *et al.*, 1995).
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40 [Insert Tables 1 & 2 about here]
41

42 **Data Analysis**

43
44 Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics and correlations. A confirmatory factor analysis
45
46 (CFA) was first conducted in IBM SPSS AMOS. The fit indices for the four-factor structure (X^2
47
48 = 359.43, $df = 235$, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.07) indicate acceptable fit
49
50 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). To assess convergent and discriminant validities, we utilized composite
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52 reliability (CR), average extracted variance (AVE), and maximum shared variance (MSV). As
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3 displayed in Table 2, the thresholds for CR (> 0.70) and MSV ($MSV < AVE$) are satisfied (Hair
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5 *et al.*, 2010). Thus, we hold that our measures have both validity and reliability.

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7
8 To test the hypotheses, we utilized the Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008) PROCESS
9
10 method due to the modern inferential test of the indirect effect that it provides. This approach is
11
12 in line with the recent advancements in the statistical methods literature (Hayes, 2009).

13
14 Following Preacher and Hayes (2008), we utilized the bootstrapping procedures with 5,000
15
16 samples to place a 95% confidence interval around the estimates of the indirect effect. We ran
17
18 Model 4 twice, once to test the model using distributive justice and another to test the model
19
20 using procedural justice (treating the dimension not studied as a covariate and thus controlling
21
22 for its effect).
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24

25 26 **Results**

27
28 Hypothesis 1(a) posited a negative relationship between workplace bullying and entity-
29
30 based distributive justice and this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = -0.23$; $p < 0.05$; $CI = [-0.45, -$
31
32 $0.01]$). However, hypothesis 1(b) which posited a negative relationship between workplace
33
34 bullying and entity-based procedural justice, was not supported ($\beta = -0.04$, *ns*). Hypothesis 2
35
36 predicted that workplace bullying was positively related to intentions to leave and this hypothesis
37
38 was supported ($\beta = 0.29$; $p < 0.01$; $CI = [0.07, 0.51]$). This confirms the findings of prior
39
40 research (e.g., Hogh *et al.*, 2011) that, when individuals experience a negative event like
41
42 workplace bullying, they desire to leave that organization. Hypothesis 3(a) predicted that entity-
43
44 based distributive justice was negatively related to intentions to leave and was supported ($\beta = -$
45
46 0.30 ; $p < 0.001$; $CI = [-0.46, -0.14]$). Likewise, hypothesis 3(b) predicted that entity-based
47
48 procedural justice was negatively related to intentions to leave and this was also supported ($\beta = -$
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50 0.55 ; $p < 0.001$; $CI = [-0.76, -0.35]$). This aligns with the research on event-based distributive
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3 and procedural justice and turnover intentions (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010; Paré and Tremblay,
4
5 2010).

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7
8 Lastly, regarding the mediation hypotheses, hypothesis 4(a) and 4(b), the indirect effect
9
10 of workplace bullying on intentions to leave through organizational justice was significant for
11
12 entity-based distributive justice (CI = 0.001, 0.16]), but not for entity-based procedural justice.
13
14 Thus, while we found that entity-based procedural justice has important ramifications for an
15
16 employee's intention to leave their organization, it was not a mechanism for transmitting the
17
18 effects of workplace bullying. In contrast, some of the effect of workplace bullying on an
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20 employee's reduced intention to leave was achieved through that employee's reduced
21
22 perceptions of entity-based distributive justice.
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26 **Discussion**

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28 This research provides new insights into the role of workplace bullying and entity-based
29
30 justice perceptions on intentions to leave in a healthcare context. Our results suggest that
31
32 workplace bullying is negatively related to entity-based distributive justice perceptions, but not
33
34 to entity-based procedural justice perceptions. One possible explanation for this finding is that
35
36 healthcare workers can see the tangible results of the decisions made (i.e., distributive justice),
37
38 but may not be aware of the process that went into making those decisions (i.e., procedural
39
40 justice). In other words, a lack of distributive justice might be more apparent to bullied
41
42 employees than a lack of procedural justice. For example, a bullied employee might perceive that
43
44 their bully is getting better shifts at work and believe that the organization is behaving unfairly
45
46 by "rewarding" the bully. On the other hand, they may not be aware of the process in place for
47
48 that decision, so their level of workplace bullying experience would not influence procedural
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50 justice. Next, we also found support for the negative relationship between entity-based
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3 distributive and procedural justice perceptions and intentions to leave, which suggests that when
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5 workers perceive that their organization is fair in its policies and procedures and comes to
6
7 decisions fairly, that they are less likely to leave. Moreover, we found that experiencing
8
9 workplace bullying and intention to leave is positively related, which corroborates previous
10
11 research (e.g., Laschinger *et al.*, 2012). Holistically, our findings reinforce that there are stark
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13 consequences for organizations if workplace bullying is present and if there is lack of perceived
14
15 fairness throughout the organization.
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19 However, the greatest contribution of our study is the exploration of the mechanism by
20
21 which workplace bullying influences intentions to leave: organizational justice. Specifically, we
22
23 find that entity-based distributive justice mediates the relationship between workplace bullying
24
25 and intentions to leave, indicating that when healthcare employees experience workplace
26
27 bullying, they begin to view the organization as unfair (specifically that organizational outcomes
28
29 are unfair) and this leads them to consider leaving the organization permanently. Interestingly,
30
31 we did not find a statistically significant relationship between workplace bullying and entity-
32
33 based procedural justice, nor did procedural justice mediate the relationship between workplace
34
35 bullying and intention to leave. One potential reason for the significant relationship between
36
37 workplace bullying and distributive justice, but not procedural justice, lies in overtness of
38
39 distributive justice and the opaqueness of procedural justice: it is much easier to notice
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41 differences in outcomes than processes. In fact, research supports this notion, with McFarlin and
42
43 Sweeney (1992) finding that distributive justice was more important for personal outcomes,
44
45 while procedural justice was more important for broader organizational outcomes. Arguably,
46
47 both workplace bullying experiences and intentions to leave are personal outcomes and
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49 experiences rather than organizational. Consequently, workplace bullying did negatively
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Organizational Justice & Healthcare

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2
3 influence perceptions of distributive justice, and this ultimately affected intentions to leave.

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5 While procedural justice did significantly and negatively relate to intentions to leave, this was a
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7 direct effect and not an indirect effect.
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10 This research has important implications for practitioners, as the industry faces the
11 challenge of attracting and retaining healthcare professionals in the wake of the Affordable Care
12 Act (ACA), more commonly known as “Obamacare” (which was a comprehensive health care
13 reform law enacted in 2010 that sought to increase health care access and lower health care
14 costs) and in the context of growing need due to baby boomers who will need medical care
15 (ASHHRA, 2011). Unfortunately, many healthcare professionals are leaving the industry entirely
16 or switching out of a patient-facing role. Research indicates that 30% of nursing professionals
17 will do so within the first three years of working in the field (Aiken *et al.*, 2002; Cipriano, 2006).
18 Likewise, 34% of physicians intend to leave the profession in 10 years (Sofranec, 2012). This
19 makes our findings about justice and bullying relevant to practitioners. The findings from this
20 study indicate that when healthcare professionals perceive their organization as just, they are less
21 likely to intend to leave. Furthermore, this indicates that organizations should strive to create an
22 environment of perceived fairness through transparency in decision-making and in the
23 distribution of outcomes. Examples of this include organizations providing information on how
24 important outcomes (e.g., pay, promotion, shift assignment, etc.) are decided and striving to
25 make these outcomes based on objective and transparent data. Moreover, our study reinforces
26 prior research (e.g., Hogh *et al.*, 2011) that workplace bullying is detrimental for organizations,
27 highlighting that healthcare organizations should seek to create environments devoid of
28 workplace mistreatment, as workplace bullying leads to lower perceptions of fairness and,
29 ultimately, the bullied employee is more likely to intent to leave the organization. There are
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Organizational Justice & Healthcare

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1
2
3 several steps that healthcare organizations can take to limit workplace bullying and thus avoid
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5 the negative outcomes associated with it (i.e., lower perceptions of justice and increased
6
7 intentions to leave). For example, organizations can introduce specific anti-bullying policies
8
9 (e.g., Mathieson *et al.*, 2006; Richards and Daley, 2003), which include defining what behaviors
10
11 are unacceptable and disclosing the procedure for reporting harassment and the procedure for
12
13 investigating harassment. Additionally, successful anti-bullying policies involve all levels of
14
15 staff in the development and implementation of the policies; managers must also be provided
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17 with guidelines and training in order for policies to be successful in reducing incidences of
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19 workplace bullying (Vartia *et al.*, 2003).
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Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides many unique contributions to the healthcare literature, there are limitations. For instance, due to the research design there could be issues with common method bias, although methods were taken a priori to reduce this through design techniques including protecting respondent anonymity to reduce over-inflation of the self-reports (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The primary limitation, however, of this study is the use of healthcare workers enrolled in a graduate program. Although the MBA students were actively working full-time in the healthcare industry, this could affect the generalizability of the findings. One could argue that the respondents' participation in a healthcare MBA program could create a bias as this sample could intend to leave their organization more than the average healthcare worker (as that could be a motivation for joining the program). Given the nature of our study, future researchers could replicate the current study with a larger sample size within a healthcare facility.

One additional limitation of this study is that the questions we asked the participants related to their experience with bullying assumes that the participants were the target of bullying and not the instigator, since bullying is prevalent in healthcare (e.g., Laschinger *et al.*, 2012). Yet, there is a stream of literature which focuses on the traits of the workplace bullies (cf. Etienne, 2014; Linton and Power, 2013). As such, it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the behaviors of workplace bullies in healthcare, yet we do realize that it is a limitation in the current study and an opportunity for future researchers to explore.

Future research could include testing our instrument across different types of healthcare organizations. Particularly, ~~hierarchical linear modelling (HLM)~~ multi-level modeling would be useful to analyze group differences, as there might be differences due to position type.

Additionally, the inclusion of entity-based interpersonal and informational justices is an avenue

1
2
3 worth exploring to evaluate how these types of justice would influence the relationship between
4
5 workplace bullying and intentions to leave.
6

7 8 **Conclusion** 9

10 This study investigates the mediating effect of entity-based organizational justices
11 (distributive and procedural) on the relationship between workplace bullying and intentions to
12 leave. The findings indicate that workplace bullying leads to intentions to leave and that this
13 effect is transmitted by lower entity-based distributive justice perceptions. Additionally, we find
14 that both entity-based distributive and procedural justices are negative related to intentions to
15 leave, while workplace bullying is positively related to intentions to leave. This study extends
16 the research on organizational justice, workplace bullying, and intentions to leave in a healthcare
17 context. We also provide implications of our findings for healthcare workers.
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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for All Variables

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Distributive Justice	3.28	0.93	-					
2. Procedural Justice	3.58	0.76	0.39**	-				
3. Workplace Bullying	2.15	0.75	-0.23**	-0.05	-			
4. Intentions to Leave	2.68	1.05	-0.43**	-0.50**	0.28**	-		
5. Age	35.97	9.02	-0.01	0.03	-0.17*	-0.12	-	
6. Gender	1.71	0.46	0.10	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01	-0.06	-
7. Ethnicity	1.77	1.08	0.05	-0.06	0.01	0.14	-0.10	0.06

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$, two-tailed. $N = 146$

Note: Gender coded as 1=male, 2=female; Ethnicity coded as 1=Caucasian, 2=African-American, 3=Hispanic/Latino, 4=Asian, 5=other.

Table 2

Reliability and Validity for Variables in Study

	CR	AVE	MSV	Workplace Bullying	Distributive Justice	Intentions to Leave	Procedural Justice
Workplace Bullying	0.933	0.501	0.113	0.708			
Distributive Justice	0.886	0.663	0.239	-0.243	0.814		
Intentions to Leave	0.839	0.638	0.364	0.336	-0.489	0.798	
Procedural Justice	0.793	0.569	0.364	-0.109	0.465	-0.604	0.755

Note: The numbers in diagonal cell are \sqrt{AVE} .

Employee Relations

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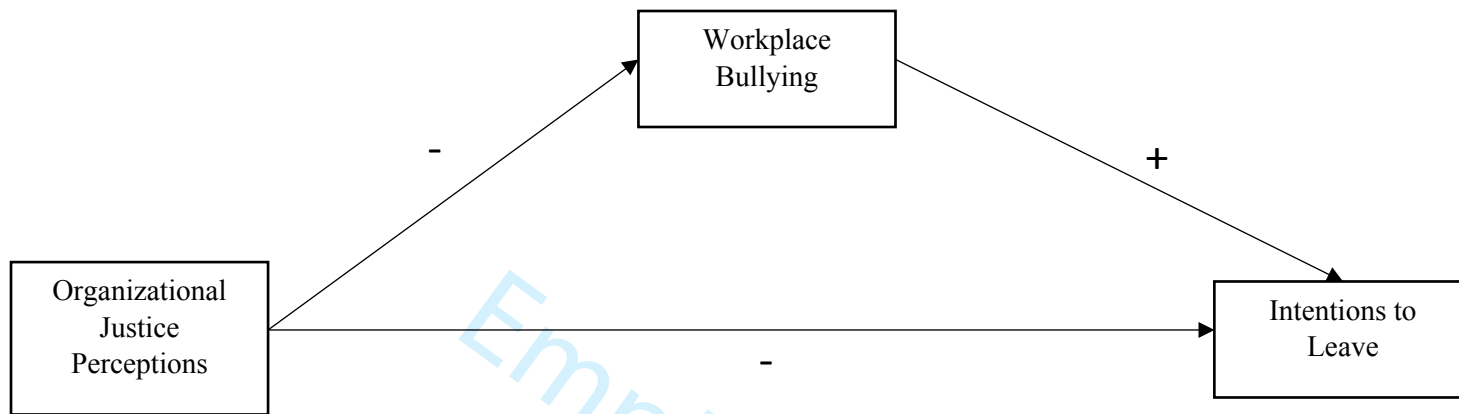


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Employee Relations