



The Impact of Shared Fate in Organizations

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Abstract

Title: The Impact of Shared Fate in Organizations

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Many studies have been conducted in the field of organizational justice and several authors have discussed the impact of individual's perceptions of fairness in the workplace in their actions and behaviors, but only recently researchers started to explore the characteristics of the relationship between the justice agent and the recipient. This thesis intends to further explore one such concept, shared fate. Shared fate is defined as perceived shared outcomes between the decision maker/communicator and the recipient of the decision. For this study, the scenario-based experiment included 79 participants, in a setting of imminent salary cuts. Two variants of this scenario were analyzed, conditioned by whether or not these cuts were shared with top management. Results indicate that shared fate leads to an increase in the intentions of organizational citizenship behavior and decision acceptance, and a decrease in intentions of withdrawal behavior, through the mediational effect of overall justice. The findings suggest that individual's perceptions of justice in such scenarios can be positively impacted by a strategic choice of decision communicators.

Resumo

Título: O Impacto do “Shared Fate” nas Organizações

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Palavras-chave: justiça organizacional, “shared fate”, percepções de justiça, responsável pela tomada/ comunicação da decisão, cortes salariais, comportamentos de cidadania organizacional, comportamentos contraprodutivos, aceitação da decisão

Resumo

Diversos estudos foram efetuados na área da justiça organizacional e vários autores discutiram o impacto das percepções de justiça no trabalho dos indivíduos nas suas ações e comportamentos. Contudo, apenas recentemente os investigadores começaram a explorar as características da relação entre as pessoas que tomam ou comunicam decisões e as pessoas que são afetadas por essas mesmas decisões, ou seja, aqueles que exercem (in)justiça e os que são afetados por (in)justiça. Este artigo pretende explorar um conceito relacionado: o “shared fate”. Este conceito é definido como os resultados partilhados percebidos entre o responsável pela tomada/ comunicação da decisão e o destinatário da decisão. Neste artigo, uma experiência baseada em cenários incluiu 79 participantes, num cenário de cortes salariais iminentes. Duas variantes deste cenário foram analisadas, condicionadas pelo fato dos cortes serem ou não partilhados com os gestores de topo. Os resultados indicam que o “shared fate” se traduz num aumento de intenções de comportamentos de cidadania organizacional e da aceitação da decisão, e numa diminuição em termos de intenções de comportamentos contraprodutivos, através do efeito mediador da percepção de justiça global. Os resultados sugerem que as percepções de justiça do indivíduo em tais cenários podem ser impactadas positivamente por uma escolha estratégica do comunicador da decisão.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations need to share negative outcomes with employees in order to overcome difficult times. These outcomes can include payment cuts, resource cuts, layoffs and relocation. How employees respond to the companies' actions depends on the fairness of those measures and of the procedures involving them (Gilliland & Chan, 2001). Organizational justice theories have looked at how employees compare what they experience to other employees, either peers or supervisors, and the fairness perception related to the different outcomes.

However, research has only recently started investigating the comparisons people make between their fate and that of the communicator or decision maker, and what impacts it has when they feel they are receiving the same treatment as the one who communicates or decides the procedures that will take place.

Research Focus

In this research, this gap is addressed by proposing an important characteristic of the decision maker that could influence justice perceptions: shared fate, i. e. whether the decision maker and the recipient of the decision share equal outcomes. This is an important issue to investigate for practical and theoretical reasons.

From a practical point of view, it can be a way to decrease organizational injustice perceptions on potential unfair situations. It is very important for companies to understand what makes employees feel they are being fairly treated in order to take the best actions, and maximize job satisfaction and performance, by avoiding behaviors that can result in injustice perceptions (Colquitt et al., 2001).

From a theoretical point of view, it might mean that there are several aspects that the organizational justice theorists are not taking into account.

Along the years, different paths have been followed by theorists, resulting in several breakthroughs, as well as some setbacks and many narrative reviews (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). Even nowadays some people follow different theories and defend different aspects as being the most relevant for the subject. Moreover, for several times, authors have discovered that they were not taking into account some important issues that could have a great impact on justice perceptions. This may be one of those aspects.

Why is justice important?

As described by Colquitt et al. (2001), justice is related to “subjective perceptions of fairness” (p. 425) and it can create an impact in the decision-making process. Organizational justice matters for several reasons, for instance to understand how fairness perceptions can impact people’s reactions, making it possible to change those perceptions and, furthermore, the outcome (Colquitt et al., 2013). It can play a relevant role in the effective functioning of organizations, as well as in the satisfaction of the employees that work there. Also, as mentioned by Deutsch (1975), justice should foster effective social cooperation since it affects the individual well-being of groups or communities.

According to Colquitt et al. (2001), organizational justice can be predicted by the fairness of outcome distribution and by the fairness of the procedures defined to allocate the outcome. Regarding outcome distribution, it is more commonly known as distributive justice and it has been studied for many years (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975). In what concerns fairness of procedures, the construct is called procedural justice (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

Organizational justice has been related to different organizational outcomes, namely job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust in management, organizational citizenship behavior, intentions to turnover, withdrawal and theft (Gilliland & Chan, 2001). Individual perceptions of fairness can lead to different attitudes and behaviors, making the difference between positive and negative consequences. Gilliland and Chan discussed the possibility that perceptions of injustice could lead to decisions to retaliate and engage in withdrawal behavior, whereas justice is more related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Thesis Objective

The purpose of this research is to look at shared fate as a predictor of the behavior and the perceptions of injustice among the employees. Previous research on equity of outcomes or equality of outcomes has looked at how employees compare their fate with the one of their peers and supervisors (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975).

However research has not looked in depth at perceived shared outcomes among the decision maker and the recipient of the decision. It is called shared fate and it will be

investigated in this research as a possible predictor of employee justice perceptions and employee justice reactions on negative outcomes.

Thesis Structure

This dissertation is structured as follows: Literature Review, Hypotheses, Methods, Results and Discussion. First, there is an analysis of the different theories developed along the years and the introduction of some concepts that were crucial in the development of this paper. Second, the four hypotheses used in this research are presented and explained. Third, the methodology used to conduct the study is described. Fourth, in Results section, the findings of the study will be presented. Finally, results will be discussed and some limitations and future research will be identified.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned previously, organizational justice explores people's perceptions of fairness in organizations and it is gaining more importance, since it can be the key to understand employees and to take measures accordingly to increase satisfaction and productivity (Colquitt et al., 2001). Considering it can affect different dimensions of employees' working lives, organizations are increasingly concerned about this subject.

The literature review is divided in 3 main sections. The first section will describe the four major waves of justice research, introducing overall justice as part of the integrative wave, which will be a crucial construct for this article. In the second section, shared fate will be discussed as an important predictor of fairness perceptions. The last section, will introduce the constructs of organizational citizenship behavior, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance, and their importance for employees and organizations.

Four Waves of Organizational Justice Research

Organizational justice research studies fairness perceptions as an important source of employee motivation. This area has been studied for more than 30 years, and in four major waves (Gilliland & Chan, 2001; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel & Rupp, 2001): distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and integrative effects. Whereas the first three waves refer to specific types of justice – and answer the question “what is the type of unfairness?” – the final wave brings the three types together, to answer the question “how are justice judgments made?”. Each of these is considered below.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice was the first one to capture the attention of the organizational theorists and it refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes among individuals. It gained attention with Adams in 1965 through his equity theory. He claimed that people compare their perceived ratio of outcomes and inputs with the ratio of relevant others. Felt injustice is a response to different ratios and motivates people to reduce the inequity.

However, according to Deutsch (1975), distributive justice should consider other principles besides equity. He argued that the equity theory had several limitations since

justice issues do not arise only from economic relations. So, he introduced the equality rule, which states that fairness in allocation occurs when all individuals collect equal share, and the needs rule, which suggests that each person receives according to his relative need. Deutsch concluded that equity was going to be predominantly used in relations whose primary purpose was economic productivity, equality when the emphasis was on the maintenance of pleasant social relationships, and need in relationships of cooperation driven by the fostering of individual development and well-being.

Procedural Justice

A second wave started to be researched in the mid-1970s by Thibaut and Walker (1975), once researchers realized that people were also attentive to the fairness of the procedure that conducts to the outcome. Procedural justice is the perceived fairness of the process taken to reach a certain decision and Thibaut and Walker focused their research on two key elements: process control, which underlines the ability to have voice in the decision process, and decision control, that refers to the power that an individual have in the actual attribution of the decision. Other approaches for procedural justice were developed, as the Leventhal (1980) model in which he claims that procedures are considered fair if they are performed with: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy of information, correctability, representativeness, and ethicality.

It has been shown that procedural justice is more plausible to affect directly individuals' reactions when outcomes are not fair (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Moreover, outcome favorability is more likely to have a positive correlation with individuals' reactions when in the presence of a relatively low procedural justice. In addition, negative reactions occur when low procedural fairness and low outcome favorability are combined.

Interactional Justice

A more recent extension to research on organizational justice is interactional justice, which reflects the quality of the interaction with the supervisor and includes explanations for decisions, honesty and respectful treatment of the individuals. This type of justice was added to the first two by Bies and Moag in 1986.

Later on, Greenberg (1993) proposed the division of interactional justice into two distinct types of justice: informational justice, when it relates to the supply of information and explanations for the decision, and into interpersonal justice, that occurs if the people

responsible for implementing the decision show a dignified and respectful behavior. So informational justice can constitute a social determinant of procedural justice, acting on people's reactions to processes, as long as they receive the necessary information to evaluate structural aspects of the procedures. Interpersonal justice can constitute a social aspect of distributive justice, since respect can help people feeling better about an unfavorable outcome.

Integrative Effects

The fourth and most recent wave of research concerns integrative approaches, in which theorists started to understand that they could not analyze the different constructs separately (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel & Rupp, 2001). Rather than focusing on a specific justice facet – distributive, procedural, or interactional – in this wave of research scholars began to examine the process by which justice judgments were made.

This section intends to discuss the main theories that postulate how justice perceptions are formulated, as well as addressing the importance of fairness for individuals, and introducing the construct of overall justice.

How are justice judgments formed? Different theories studied how people form justice judgments, namely Referent Cognition Theory (Folger, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1993), Fairness Theory and Fairness Heuristic Theory (Lind, 2001a). In these theories, the different justice dimensions were often not distinguished, as the theories were supposed to be more general in nature.

In Referent Cognition Theory (RCT), Folger (1986a, 1986b, 1987 and 1993) argued that, when people judge events as being fair or unfair, it should also be considered people's awareness of alternative procedures that could lead to better outcomes. In other words, an individual who is aware of procedural alternatives that lead to a more favorable outcome is more likely to perceive injustice than someone who is not aware of alternatives. This occurs even with similar outcomes (Folger & Martin, 1986).

Folger and Cropanzano (1998, 2001) pointed out some limitations of the RCT, such as not mentioning the process by which people hold other accountable for unfair judgments, ignoring the socioemotional aspects of referents, and disregarding the impact of people's adversities and possible violations of the moral code of fairness on the creation of perceptions of organizational justice.

Considering these limitations, the authors build on the RCT and presented the Fairness Theory, which postulated that a situation can be considered socially unjust if an individual hold another as accountable for a given event where his/ her well-being has been threatened. This theory proposes that three procedures must happen for the individual to judge the fairness of a situation: 1) the individual must be in the presence of some adversities (*would* component); 2) the individual must decide who is responsible for the injustice (*could* component); and 3) the individual must consider if the actions violate some ethical principle or moral code (*should* component). So, the individual must understand how another situation *would* have felt, if the one responsible for the situation *could* have done something different, and how individuals *should* treat each other.

It has been developed another model that helps to explain how justice evaluations are formed: Fairness Heuristic Theory. This theory mentions that people use different shortcuts when deciding if a treatment is considered to be fair or unfair (Lind, 2001a). So, fairness judgments are available as a sequence of past impressions, and people use them if they need to decide whether or not to accept authority and to behave cooperatively. Lind explored the fundamental social dilemma considering it to be a risk of exploitation and rejection that individuals take when contributing to a social entity, feeling then uncertainty with relation to authority. In this sense, decisions involving the fundamental social dilemma will be guided by cognitive shortcuts, meaning that our actions will be regulated by fairness judgments, in order to match the perceived level of justice.

Why is fairness important? Having defined how individuals formulate perceptions of organizational justice, it is now relevant to explore why is fairness important to people. Researchers developed three models to answer this issue: the instrumental model, the relational model, and the moral virtues model. The instrumental model (Tyler, 1987) explores the possibility that people are concerned about justice because it is in their economic best interest. This model claims that individuals want to control the process if it allows them to maximize their outcome.

The relational model (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Lind, 1992) mentions people's sense of belonging as relevant to understand fairness perceptions, emphasizing that inclusion in a group can generate feelings of esteem from others and identity. In this sense, it argues that people will evaluate a procedure as being fair if the relationship with authorities and group members is positive, and if it conveys group identification (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel & Rupp, 2001).

A third model was proposed by Folger (1994, 1998), exploring the idea that people value fairness even in the absence of an economic benefit. The moral virtues model postulates that human beings can also be motivated by morality and ethics.

Overall Justice. Ambrose and Schminke (2009) built on the integrative wave by introducing the construct of overall justice. According to them, overall justice “mediates the relationship between specific justice facets (distributive, procedural, and interactional) and outcomes” (p. 491). They show that overall justice judgments are more than simply the sum or average of judgments regarding the identified dimensions. This suggests that in many cases, employees judge fairness overall and “on the whole”. In situations where all justice dimensions could be relevant, or when there are not theoretical reasons for believing that only some justice dimensions are relevant, it can be preferable to measure overall justice judgments.

This research will be focused on overall justice, instead of a specific justice dimension. First, due to the scope of the research, focusing on different types of justice may not produce a clear, complete picture of the relations that this research intends to examine. Second, because individuals do not act based on an individual type of justice, but rather, they do so based on an overall sense of justice (Greenberg, 2001; Shapiro, 2001; Lind, 2001b). Third, as Ambrose and Schminke (2009) stated, overall justice should be used instead of any specific type of justice unless a clear basis exists for it; it is also especially useful in analyzing relative impact in relation to other organizational motives.

Shared Fate as a Predictor of Justice Perceptions

Impact of “who” decides or communicates

Numerous predictors of organizational justice perceptions have been theorized and tested. For example, research on distributive justice has shown that inequitable rewards lead to perceptions of injustice (Adams, 1965). Procedural justice research has shown that certain decision criteria lead to perceptions of injustice (Leventhal, 1980). Finally, work on interactional justice emphasizes the importance of detailed explanations and polite and respectful treatment (Bies & Moag, 1986).

To date, there has been only a few theories where authors explored how characteristics of the communicator/ decision maker can influence justice perceptions.

This includes the selection of agents, one of the seven procedural components proposed by Leventhal (1980), in which he suggests that “an individual may evaluate the fairness of methods for selecting decision makers who control the allocative process” (p. 54). In other words, if an employee feels that the higher authorities choose the agents based on unfair procedures, than his/ her sense of justice can decrease.

Mansour-Cole and Scott (1998) also developed a study in which they analyzed the influence of the source on justice perceptions in a layoff context. They were able to show that the closeness of the leader-subordinate relationship can lead to higher perceptions of procedural fairness, if the employees were informed directly by supervisors, in comparison to receiving the information via co-workers, formal announcement or the grapevine.

Furthermore, Blader and Tyler (2003) proposed a four-component model of procedural justice that includes two types of justice (decision making and quality of treatment) and two sources of justice (formal and informal). In this model they consider a broader view of “procedures”, namely by including the informal source: interactions people have with their managers. Additionally, Crawshaw (2006) mentioned that employees consider line managers as a source of fairness when assessing career development practices.

Most recently, Rupp, Shao, Jones, and Liao (2014) found that the perceived source of justice has an important impact on employees’ sense of fairness, and, consequently, in their attitudes and behaviors. Also, Cojuharenco, Marques and Patient (2017) developed the agent bias theory that postulates that the source of information can be relevant for the justice judgment formations, considering the effect of specific agent characteristics.

Self-Sacrificing and Ethical Leadership

Over the last two decades, some research has been made in the field of self-sacrificing leadership. Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998) have defined self-sacrificing leadership as the leaders abandoning or postponing their personal needs in the interest of the followers. Moreover, they mentioned that leadership involves sharing pains with employees, which will set the example for the incumbents and encourage them to be more cooperative and understanding. Especially in times of crises, it is important that leaders engage in personal sacrifices in order to convince employees to cooperate and overcome problems. The idea that motivates this concept is that a reciprocal behavior will be triggered as employees feel more prompt to duplicate the leaders’ sacrifice. This justifies

the importance of leaders setting an example for followers before asking them to make any special sacrifice.

Another field that has been studied more recently, and that is implicitly related with self-sacrificing, is ethical leadership (Stouten et al., 2012). There is a link between these two constructs since the latter one also includes leader's concerns with the interests of others and preoccupation to avoid harming employees. As mentioned by Stouten et al., nowadays organizations are giving more importance to the role of ethical behaviors when conducting their business. Leaders must act ethically (according to the defined ethical standards) in order to encourage this kind of behavior in employees and gain their trust. Ethical leaders will drive their subordinates into following their path and engaging in ethical conducts, by treating them fairly and with respect. Moreover, it will increase the trust, satisfaction and dedication of employees, since they will positively evaluate the actions performed by ethical leaders.

Definition of Shared Fate

For the most part the characteristics of who made or communicated a decision have been overlooked, and not related to any of the specific justice dimensions, or to overall justice. Moreover, the constructs of self-sacrificing and ethical leadership are only useful to introduce the idea of shared fate, being unable to fully represent it.

Shared fate occurs when decision maker/ communicator suffers the same consequences of the employees. That is, shared fate is a contextual factor that influences the relationship between employees and the source of justice. Past research has included comparisons between the outcomes received by one employee as compared to other employees. However, the comparison between the fate of the employee and the fate of the decision maker has not been examined. Doing so can be important because when employees receive negative outcomes they often look whether their managers and leaders are "sharing the pain".

As an example, consider a company that, when faced with several economic problems, is forced to cut salaries for a certain period of time for all employees; a decision top management communicates. Shared fate means all salaries are cut; including top management's. If only the non-management employees' salaries were cut, there wouldn't be shared fate: the measure wouldn't have influenced the entire organization. When the communicator of bad news does not face the same consequences, there is no shared fate.

The morale of employees can be expected to decrease in the face of difficult times and if the pain is not shared amongst everybody. Shared fate between management and non-management employees can increase employee morale and, indirectly, strengthen team spirit. It also implies the sacrifice of everyone and can lead to the decrease of injustice perceptions on potential unfair situations.

The idea for this study was based on a paper written by Greenberg (1990). In it, Greenberg did an experiment in order to assess the impact of temporary wage cuts in two manufacturing plants. He was then able to find that employee theft can be a consequence of underpayment inequality. Moreover, the results showed that theft rate can be reduced when the conditions of wage cuts are properly communicated to employees, since an adequate explanation was provided in only one plant. However, there were other differences between plants that could also explain the variations in the theft rate, namely the fact that, in one plant, it is explicit that the payment cut affected everyone, in opposition to the other. There is some evidence, then, that shared fate might significantly influence theft rate, through the perception of justice and fairness of employees; a relation worth investigating.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Psychological Withdrawal and Decision Acceptance

Having established how shared fate is a subject worth of exploration, it is important to address other constructs that can be expected to be related to it, through its impact on overall justice. These constructs are organizational citizenship behavior, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance:

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as the employees going beyond established job descriptions. In other words, employees don't just do what is formally required by the organization, they help in some other ways besides their function. Lee and Allen (2002) have made extensive research on the subject, who postulated that "OCBs are employee behaviors that, although not critical to the task or job, serve to facilitate organizational functioning" (p. 132). Other researchers have explored the relation between OCB and justice. For example, Organ (1988, 1990) explores the relation between job satisfaction and fairness, and suggests OCB as a reliable input for an equity ratio. Also, several authors mentioned different positive outcomes of

OCB, namely improving employees and organization performance, facilitating managers in coordinating and effectively using resources, increasing team members' productivity and coordination, etc. (Cohen & Vigoda, 2000; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994; Podsakoff et al., 1997).

Lehman and Simpson published a paper where they explored psychological withdrawal as a response to job dissatisfaction, which is a direct consequence of perceived unfairness. The construct can be described as time and effort spent on tasks that are not related to the job and can include "daydreaming, doing personal tasks at work, chatting excessively with co-workers, putting little effort into the job, and letting others do the work" (Lehman & Simpson, 1992, p. 312). They were able to find that dissatisfied employees can start to engage in psychological withdrawal behaviors. Fuentes and Sawyer (1989) also explored this behavior. The result was a model that described how dissatisfied employees reacted, with specific responses ranging from organizational withdrawal to job adaptation. Furthermore, psychological withdrawal behaviors have been related to several negative outcomes, such as absenteeism, burnout and turnover intentions (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

Decision acceptance was mainly developed by Greenberg (1994). The author concluded that people's acceptance of negative outcomes will increase if the reasons for implementing a certain action are properly explained and if interpersonal sensitivity is demonstrated during the process. If people feel fairly treated, they will more easily accept decisions.

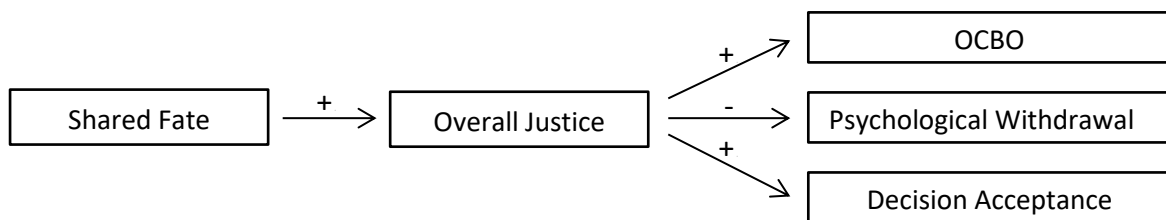
In this sense, these constructs are worth studying to increase the positive impact in employees and organizations, and decrease the negative one, by understanding what can lead to such behaviors.

HYPOTHESES

In this section it is explained why shared fate is expected to lead to OCBO, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance, and for these relationships to be mediated by overall justice (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Conceptual Model

Effect of Shared Fate on OCBO, Psychological Withdrawal
and Decision Acceptance, mediated by Overall Justice



Shared Fate and Overall Justice

There is some evidence that supports the link between shared fate and overall justice as a positive one. First off, considering the definition of shared fate, it is a direct consequence of equity (Adams, 1965), given that it describes how individuals compare received results and inputs with the ones of relevant others, although equity in this type of research pertains mainly to how equally employees feel treated in relation to their peers. In other words, if equity feelings develop from shared fate, as stated, it has a positive impact in justice perceptions. Taking from what was explored in relation to overall justice (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009), especially in what concerns individuals experience with different types of justice, the relative impact in justice perceptions can be translated as impact to an overall sense of justice.

Another important component to this relationship resides in self-sacrificing and ethical leadership, which have also been explored previously. For the purpose of the article and building on the construct of shared fate, it is assumed that shared fate is correlated to, and implies, self-sacrificing leadership, seeing how the manager sacrifices his own earnings in favor of the company – the greater good. As such, shared fate is

indicative of ethical leadership, and thus, it is plausible to hypothesize a correlation between shared fate and an increase in perceptions of fairness and cooperative behavior by employees.

Therefore, a positive relationship between shared fate and overall justice is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Shared fate is positively related to overall justice.

Overall Justice and OCBO

As stated previously, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as employee behaviors that go beyond what is required of their function in order to help the organization or its members. It has been shown to be correlated with perceptions of fair treatment (Lee & Allen, 2002). Considering how overall justice is expected to stem from fairness perceptions, it makes sense to investigate the relation between overall justice and OCB in this research.

Before establishing the prediction for the relation of these two constructs, it is important to note that OCB is further divided into two dimensions: OCBI - behaviors towards individuals, and OCBO - behaviors towards the organization (McNeely & Meglino, 1994). For the purpose of the research, and given the fact that the analysis is being conducted with respect to the impact of individuals' behavior towards the benefit of the organization, OCBO was focused.

Also, both McNeely and Meglino (1994) and Lee and Allen (2002) found a correlation between OCBO and fairness, consistent with the results regarding OCB. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: Shared fate is positively related to OCBO, and this relationship is mediated by overall justice.

Overall Justice and Psychological Withdrawal

Lehman and Simpson (1992) explored the relationship between job dissatisfaction and psychological withdrawal, building on previous typologies by Fuentes and Sawyer (1989). This model, of job adaptation, included a number of responses to negative stimuli, and showed a relationship between an increase of withdrawal behaviors and low job satisfaction.

Considering how perceptions of unfairness lead to an increase in job dissatisfaction, it's expected for overall justice to have a negative impact on psychological withdrawal. In other words, an increase in overall justice will make employees engage in more productive actions towards the organization, as opposed to dysfunctional behaviors such as absenteeism, idling, or theft. The prediction is then:

Hypothesis 3: Shared fate is negatively related to psychological withdrawal, and this relationship is mediated by overall justice.

Overall Justice and Decision Acceptance

As stated by Greenberg (1994), a direct consequence of a fair treatment to employees is that they will have an easier time accepting decisions. Moreover, fair treatment is a cause of perceived overall justice. Therefore, it is plausible to hypothesize a connection between overall justice and decision acceptance. This plausibility is strengthened by looking at the three components of decision acceptance: perceived fairness, affective commitment toward the job, and behavioral intentions toward the job. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: Shared fate is positively related to decision acceptance, and this relationship is mediated by overall justice.

METHOD

Sample

The sample for this study is constituted by U.S. citizens with work experience of an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk) that answered the survey. The participants received \$0.40 in exchange for filling in the questionnaire. There were included three “trap questions” to make sure participants were reading and following the survey instructions, rather than answering randomly. From the original sample of 81, two respondents were eliminated as they failed trap questions.

Out of the 79 participants, 59.5% were men and mean age was 29.65 (SD = 8.92). Of the respondents, 86.1% were currently employed. In what concerns work experience, 20.3% of the respondents had up to three years of work experience, 67.1% had up to 10 years of work experience, and 12.7% had more than 20 years of work experience. Regarding the highest education achieved, 36.7% had only high school education, 17.7% had community college education, 38% had university education, and 7.6% had graduate school education.

Design and Procedure

The experiment was constituted by a scenario in which the organization was going to cut salaries, followed by the measures for overall justice, organizational citizenship behaviors, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance. The study design included two conditions: shared fate and non-shared fate. In both scenarios participants were told that the company where they were working was facing some economic difficulties due to external factors and that the CEO communicates some cuts in the salaries. However, in the shared fate condition, participants were told that the salary cuts were shared among employees and top management. In the non-shared fate condition participants were told that the cuts were only for non-management employees.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: 41 participants were assigned to the shared fate condition and 38 participants were assigned to the non-shared fate condition.

For the analyses, our independent variable was coded such that shared fate = 1, and non-shared fate = 0.

Measures

Manipulation Check

Participants answered a question to check if the scenario was understood and the experimental manipulation worked. Participants indicated whether they agree if the salary cuts are going to be shared between employees and top management, in a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

To test the quality of the measures, the scales' reliability with Cronbach's alpha was assessed, which is given in brackets below, following sample items for each scale.

Overall Justice

Overall justice perceptions were assessed using Kim's (2004, cited in Kim & Leung, 2007) scale. The scale was preceded by the following instruction: "Please now indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements" and included all three items of the original scale: "In general, I am fairly treated in this organization", "All in all, this organization treats me fairly" and "Overall, I believe I receive fair treatment from this organization" ($\alpha=.99$). The items were answered in a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The organization-focused dimension of organizational citizenship behavior was measured using Lee and Allen's (2002) eight-item scale. This scale specifically asks about discretionary behaviors directed at the organization, which are often considered a good measure of performance. Participants were asked how likely they are "to engage in the behaviors listed in the near future in response to the salary cut decision just announced". Items to respond included: "I will offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization" ($\alpha=.95$). The items were responded in a scale ranging from 1 (Highly unlikely) to 7 (Highly likely).

Psychological Withdrawal

The Lehman and Simpson (1992) scale was used to evaluate psychological withdrawal. The scale was preceded by the following sentence: "How likely would you be to engage in the behaviors listed in the near future in response to the salary cut decision just announced?" and included seven of the eight items of the original scale, such as: "I

will be absent from work”, “I will leave work station for unnecessary reasons” and “I will let others do my work” ($\alpha=.93$). One of the items of the scale was not used since it represents quit intentions. The scale range in which the items were answered varied from 1 (Highly unlikely) to 7 (Highly likely).

Decision Acceptance

Decision acceptance was assessed using 3 items adapted from Greenberg (1994) by Patient and Skarlicki (2010). Items included “I find the news that was communicated acceptable” ($\alpha=.89$). Scale anchors went from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

Data Analysis Strategy

To develop the data analysis strategy, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlations were computed.

The mediation model, with single regressions, was conducted using the three steps of Baron and Kenny (1986). The first step concerns the effect of the independent variable on the mediator, i. e. the effect of shared fate on overall justice, and it involves treating the mediator as an outcome variable. The second step mentions the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables, i. e. the effect of shared fate on OCBO, withdrawal behavior and decision acceptance, and it implies the establishment of an effect which may be mediated. The third step constitutes the full model, involving the mediation effect of overall justice between shared fate and each one of the dependent variables. One simple regression was conducted for each dependent variable.

Also, the bootstrapping procedure for indirect effects with Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the mediation model results. Bootstrapping allows estimation of the sampling distribution of almost any statistic using random sampling methods (Varian, 2005). So, it is a technique that gives further confirmation of the results.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

An independent means *t*-test was used to assess the success of the manipulation check of shared fate. The results revealed that, in the shared fate condition, participants indicated that the salary cuts were going to be shared between employees and top management ($M=6.02$, $SD=1.29$), whereas in the non-shared fate condition, participants indicated that the cuts were not going to be shared ($M=1.39$, $SD=1.10$), $t(77) = 17.043$, $p<.001$.

Measurement Assessment

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations among all the variables are shown in Table 1.

The Cronbach's alphas values for the constructs, provided in the diagonal of Table 1, ranged from .89 to .99, and are above the .70 cutoff suggested by the literature (e.g. Nunnally, 1967).

Analyses

Correlations

The results indicate that shared fate positively correlates with overall justice ($\beta=.58$, $p<.001$), with OCBO ($\beta=.27$, $p<.05$) and with decision acceptance ($\beta=.55$, $p<.001$), and correlates negatively with psychological withdrawal ($\beta=-.33$, $p<.01$). Moreover, overall justice ($M=3.39$, $SD=1.86$) has a positive correlation with OCBO ($\beta=.61$, $p<.001$) and with decision acceptance ($\beta=.87$, $p<.001$), and correlate negatively with psychological withdrawal ($\beta=-.47$, $p<.001$). OCBO ($M=3.17$, $SD=1.55$) has a positive correlation with decision acceptance ($\beta=.51$, $p<.001$), and does not correlate with psychological withdrawal. Psychological withdrawal ($M=3.67$, $SD=1.65$) negatively correlates with decision acceptance ($\beta=-.45$, $p<.001$).

Table 1 - Means, correlations, and internal consistency reliabilities

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Shared fate ^a	-	-					
2. Overall justice	3.39	1.86	.58***	(.99)			
3. OCBO	3.17	1.55	.27*	.61***	(.95)		
4. Psychological withdrawal	3.67	1.65	-.33**	-.47***	-.22	(.93)	
5. Decision acceptance	3.04	1.68	.55***	.87***	.51***	-.45***	(.89)

Note. *N*= 79. Internal consistency reliabilities appear in parentheses along the diagonal.

Dummy coded: ^a 1=shared fate, 0=non-shared fate

*** *p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

The effect of Shared Fate on Overall Justice (effect of independent variable on mediator)

To investigate the relationship between shared fate and overall justice, simple linear regressions were run.

As it can be seen in Table 2, shared fate positively relates to overall justice ($\beta=2.13, p<.001$). In other words, when the payment cuts are shared among employees and top management, participants perceive more overall justice than when the payment cuts are not shared. The R squared value indicates that 33% of the variance in overall justice is explained by shared fate (the independent variable). Since the relationship between shared fate and overall justice is significant, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The effect of Shared Fate on OCBO, Psychological Withdrawal and Decision Acceptance (effect of independent variable on dependent variables)

Table 2 also shows that shared fate positively relates to OCBO ($\beta=.83, p<.05$), which indicates that participants are more engaged in citizenship behaviors towards the organization when shared fate in the payment cuts exists, in comparison to when the payments cuts are only for non-management employees. Furthermore, 7% of the variability of the dependent variable (OCBO) is explained by shared fate ($R^2=.07$).

Shared fate negatively relates to psychological withdrawal ($\beta=-1.07, p<.01$), meaning that people are less likely to have psychological withdrawal behavior when the payment cuts are shared between employees and top management, than when they are not shared. With an R squared equal to 0.11, shared fate explains 11% of the variability of psychological withdrawal.

Lastly, it can be seen that shared fate positively relates to decision acceptance ($\beta=1.82, p<.001$), demonstrating that it is easier to accept a decision like payment cuts if they are shared along the company, in contrast to assign payment cuts only to non-management employees. Also, shared fate explains 30% of the variability of the decision acceptance ($R^2=.30$).

Table 2 - Effect of shared fate on mediator and dependent variables

	Overall Justice			OCBO			Psychological withdrawal			Decision acceptance		
	<i>β</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	2.28***	.25	9.17	2.74***	.24	11.25	4.23***	.25	16.61	2.10***	.23	9.10
Shared fate	2.13***	.35	6.18	.83*	.34	2.46	-1.07**	.35	-3.04	1.82***	.32	5.70
R ²	.33			.07			.11			.30		

*** p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Mediation Models

To analyze the mediating effect of overall justice on the relationships between shared fate and employee organizational citizenship behaviors, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance, shared fate and overall justice were entered as independent variables.

Because SPSS only allows to test one dependent variable at a time, three models were run, one for each of the dependent variables.

In the first model, the mediational effect of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and OCBO was analyzed. The model is presented in Table 3. The results indicate that when entering overall justice as predictor of OCBO, shared fate effect disappears ($\beta=-.37$, p n.s.) and overall justice fully mediates the relationship ($\beta=.56$, $p<.001$). That is, when the payment cuts are shared between employees and top management, employees imagine themselves engaging more in organizational citizenship behaviors than when the payment cuts are only for employees, and this is explained by the fact that when the cuts are shared, employees perceive more overall justice. Also, 38% of the variability of OCBO is explained by shared fate and overall justice ($R^2=.38$), which is higher than the model without overall justice.

In order to confirm the mediation model results, the bootstrapping procedure for the test of indirect effects suggested by Hayes (2013) was used. The results confirm that the indirect effect of shared fate on OCBO through overall justice is significant (LLCI=.73, ULCI=1.81). Since the bootstrapped Confidence Intervals do not include zero, the hypothesis on the mediating role of overall justice (H2) is supported.

Table 3 - Mediational role of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and OCBO

	OCBO		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	1.46***	.29	5.03
Shared fate	-.37	.34	-1.07
Overall Justice	.56***	.09	6.08
R ²	.38		

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

In the second model, the analysis of the mediating effect of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and psychological withdrawal was made, as it can be seen in Table 4. The results indicate that when entering overall justice as predictor of psychological withdrawal, the shared fate effect disappears ($\beta=-.28, p n.s.$), and overall justice fully mediates the relationship ($\beta=-.37, p<.01$). So, when both employees and top management suffers payment cuts, employees feel less psychological withdrawal than when only employees have their payments cut, being explained by the fact that when the cuts are shared, employees perceive more overall justice. Based on the R squared value, it can be stated that shared fate and overall justice explain 22% of the variability of psychological withdrawal. In comparison to the R squared of the model without the mediation, this value is higher.

Like in the first model, there was used the bootstrapping procedure for the test of conditional indirect effects, with the results showing that the indirect effect of shared fate on psychological withdrawal through overall justice is significant (LLCI=-1.50, ULCI=-.29). The bootstrapped Confidence Intervals do not include zero; therefore, the mediational role of overall justice (H3) is supported.

Table 4 - Mediational role of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and psychological withdrawal

	Psychological withdrawal		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	5.07***	.35	14.67
Shared fate	-.28	.41	-.70
Overall Justice	-.37**	.11	-3.38
R ²	.22		

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

In the third model, the mediating effect of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and decision acceptance was analyzed (see Table 5). The results indicate that when entering overall justice as predictor of decision acceptance, shared fate effect disappears ($\beta=.22, p n.s.$), and overall justice fully mediates the relationship ($\beta=.75, p<.001$). When the payment cuts affect employees and top management, employees are more willing to accept the payment cut decision than when the payment cuts are only for employees. This is explained by the fact that employees perceive more overall justice in situations where the cuts are shared. Additionally, 76% of the variance in decision acceptance is explained by shared fate and overall justice ($R^2=.76$), which is 46% higher than in the model without overall justice.

As previously, the bootstrapping procedure for the test of conditional indirect effects suggested by Hayes (2013) was used to confirm the mediation model results. The results show that the indirect effect of shared fate on decision acceptance through overall justice is significant (LLCI=1.08, ULCI=2.23). Since zero is not in the bootstrapped Confidence Intervals, the hypothesis on the mediational role of overall justice (H4) is supported.

Table 5 - Mediational role of overall justice on the relationship between shared fate and decision acceptance

	Decision acceptance		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	.38	.20	1.95
Shared fate	.22	.23	.95
Overall Justice	.75***	.06	12.08
R ²	.76		

*** p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05.

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study intends to show how shared fate impacts OCB, psychological withdrawal and decision acceptance through the mediational effect of overall justice. In other words, it aims to better understand the variables that will affect how employees react when management communicates them the negative outcomes of organizational decisions.

Overall, the hypotheses were supported by the analysis performed. The results indicate that shared fate is related to justice, and that its mediational role is significant at the levels analyzed. The study demonstrates that perceived shared outcomes between the decision maker/communicator and the recipient of the decision leads to the increase of organizational citizenship behavior and decision acceptance, and to the decrease of time spent in matters not relevant to the job.

Contributions to the Literature

The research contributes to the literature on organizational justice in terms of both theory and practice. It is the first paper to operationalize shared fate, as the impact of similarity in employee and manager's fate on the employee's perceptions of justice had not been previously studied in depth. Moreover, defined scales were used as well as the bootstrapping method to give further confidence in the results presented.

The results show that employees react better to salary cuts when these are shared with top management. This suggests that besides comparing their fate with peers and supervisors (Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975), employees might also evaluate the fairness of outcome distributions with the decision maker or communicator, therefore showing that distributive justice can also be applied in such situations.

From a practical perspective, the Fairness Heuristic Theory (Lind, 2001a) proposes that employees will make shortcuts when deciding if a situation is considered to be fair or not with the available information, and that they will try to match their communicator's level of justice. This study expands on these general concepts by exploring how, in practice, shared fate heuristically influences employee's fairness

perceptions. Individuals will increase their compliance and performance when shared fate is perceived to have equal levels of justice.

Additionally, according to Marques et al. (2017), entity justice, power, trust and shared identity constitute characteristics of the relationship between justice agent and justice recipient that can have an effect in fairness perceptions. Shared fate can be an additional influencer of justice judgments, by having an impact in their feelings of shared identity. This effect is stronger in cases of negative outcomes, when care should be taken to demonstrate that pain is shared by decision makers/ communicators, minimizing the impact of the outcome on the employee's perceptions of justice.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that employee perceptions in regards to the one who communicates important decisions might impact the justice perceptions of individuals and, consequently, their behaviors, thus making it important for organizations to carefully choose their communicator.

Limitations

There are some limitations which should be addressed. The studied sample was only U. S. citizens, meaning that the implications taken from it are subjective to the studied demography and its business and social context, possibly differing in other cultural settings.

Moreover, since the surveys were distributed using MTurk, there were limitations to the data collection process as the participants were unknown. However, some studies propose that MTurk generates data as reliable as the data collected in laboratory research (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Johnson & Borden, 2012). In addition, MTurk participants present higher levels of engagement, showing more willingness to contribute in comparison to lab participants.

Given that this experiment was conducted using a scenario, some might argue that the results cannot be generalized to real-life contexts, thus missing the variety of situations and environments that subjects might experience in field research (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). On the other hand, in laboratory experiments the environment and variables can be controlled, allowing to test different theories with precision since the experiment will not be affected by other variables.

Field experiments present an increase in external validity, in comparison to laboratory studies, since results can be easier to generalize and may reflect a wider

population (Dooley, 2001). In contrast, scenario-based experiments offer higher internal validity, with researchers having more control over the variables. Nevertheless, future approaches might include field studies to complement the results obtained.

The data collection process was made 4 years ago, so the results might be different from now, thus constituting a threat to external validity.

It could also be argued that the results of the study are not correct since the dependent variables, OCB and psychological withdrawal, represent an intention and not actual behavior. However, intentions are shown to be correlated with the performed behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Future Research

Regarding future research, there are many possible avenues to deepen the initial research on shared fate presented in this study. For example, more research can be developed in different geographies or groups, providing more insight about the relationship between shared fate and justice.

It is also possible to increase internal validity by having a control group, by providing information that further defines the impact of the variables studied. Another possible expansion would be to explore how different communication choices can impact participants' results, such as omitting if management will also receive the salary cuts.

There is also much to be gained by future research that expands upon the method of data collecting, such as measuring facets other than self-reported behavior, which is prone to bias.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire Scenarios

Shared Fate

You work in an organization called ABC. You have a non-management position. ABC is facing economic difficulties as a result of a changing economic environment, increased international competition, and failures in the past to adapt to new technologies. One day the CEO calls employees for an urgent announcement. The CEO communicates the following: “There is some important news regarding the future of ABC. As you know, the company is facing difficult circumstances. We face increasing competition and unexpected changes in the company’s technological environment. As a result, after much discussion, we have decided: To cut salaries by 10% for everyone, including top management, who will also have their salaries cut by 10%. The 10% salary cut will be put in place at the beginning of next month. Since employee pay is our biggest cost, this will save enough money to keep the company alive.”

Non-Shared Fate

You work in an organization called ABC. You have a non-management position. ABC is facing economic difficulties as a result of a changing economic environment, increased international competition, and failures in the past to adapt to new technologies. One day the CEO calls employees for an urgent announcement. The CEO communicates the following: “There is some important news regarding the future of ABC. As you know, the company is facing difficult circumstances. We face increasing competition and unexpected changes in the company’s technological environment. As a result, after much discussion, we have decided: To cut salaries by 10% for non-management employees. Because of their crucial role within the company, top management will not have their salaries cut. The salary cuts for non-management employees will be put in place at the beginning of next month. Since employee pay is our biggest cost, this will save enough money to keep the company alive.”

Appendix B

Questionnaire Scales

Overall Justice

1. In general, I am fairly treated in this organization.
2. All in all, this organization treats me fairly.
3. Overall, I believe I receive fair treatment from this organization.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

1. I will attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image.
2. I will keep up with developments in the organization.
3. I will defend the organization when other employees criticize it.
4. I will show pride when representing the organization in public.
5. I will offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.
6. I will express loyalty toward the organization.
7. I will take action to protect the organization from potential problems.
8. I will demonstrate concern about the image of the organization.

Psychological Withdrawal

1. I will be absent from work.
2. I will chat with co-workers about non-work topics.
3. I will leave work station for unnecessary reasons.
4. I will daydream rather than working.
5. I will spend work time on personal matters.
6. I will put less effort into job than should have.
7. I will let others do my work.

Decision Acceptance

1. I find the news that was communicated acceptable.
2. I support the news that was communicated.
3. I accept the news that was communicated.