

Twenty First Century Human Resource Management Practices: Why Does Organizational Justice Matter? An Examination of Effect of Perception of Organizational Injustice on Work Alienation and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract— Looking at the human resource from strategic perspective with innovations has been recognized as the main source of competitive advantage in the 21st century. The level of engagement and extra contribution such as organizational citizenship behavior from human resource is crucial for organizational development and, it is depending on the efficient workplace human resource practices. Managing the employees strategically also requires the human resource practices to be fair. If employees are treated injustice they may experience work alienation. On the other hand, injustice perceptions may negatively influence organizational citizenship behavior. This study takes into account the perceived organizational injustice of 224 Sri Lankan employees, and examines whether they have effect on organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, it also examine whether work alienation, which has not referred previously in organizational justice literature has mediating effects on this relationship. Results support that organizational justice is related to organizational citizenship behavior, and employee work alienation is demonstrated to be a mediator in this relationship. This is the first empirical test of this relationship. Implications of findings are also discussed.

Index Terms— Human resource practices, organizational justice, work alienation, organizational citizenship behavior, mediation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Now the trend has been changed from traditional personnel management to human resource management (*HRM*). Since human resources are inimitable and tacit by nature, it is considered as most valuable asset. The challenge of 21st century is to look at the human resource from strategic perspective with innovations to enjoy competitive advantage. Human factor and the ways they are managed are most important today to make them as a most powerful resource. As the business environment gets changed *HRM* also must be changed. *HRM* managers have moved from handling simple personnel issues to making a strategic role to the future directions and development of the organization. The degree of engagement and extra role behavior by human resource such as organizational citizenship behavior (*OCB*) is imperative for the development of organizations. However, it

is depending on the efficient workplace human resource practices.

The literature on human performance has paid attention on Organizational citizenship behavior (Lara & Rodriguez, 2007). Organizational citizenship behavior has been considered as an important employee contribution as they help in achieving organizational goals and contribute to its effectiveness (Allen & Rush, 1998). On the other hand, fairness perceptions held by employees can significantly affect their engagement levels. For example, justice perceptions are related to performance (Saks, 2006). Scholars in the area of social sciences have paid attention in the area of organizational justice perceptions (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). The need for managing the employees strategically in the 21st century also necessitates the management and the organization practices to be fair. Organizational justice perceptions strongly affect the attitude of workers (Colquitt et al., 2001). In many studies, it has been suggested that fairness affects several employee attitudes and behaviors (eg., *OCB*).

However, if workplace human resource practices are injustice, its affect may be negative in terms of attitude, behavior and performance. A number of studies conducted to find a positive relationship between organizational justice and *OCBs* (e.g., Rauf, F.H.A., 2015; Rauf, F.H.A., 2014). Only few studies are conducted the negative effect of certain human resource practices (Sulu et al., 2010). Further, if employees are treated injustice they may experience work alienation. Work alienation has consequences (eg., *OCB*). Injustice perceptions may negatively influence *OCBs*. Two important dimensions of justice are distributive justice and procedural justice. While, dimensions of organizational justice may affect work alienation and *OCBs*, work alienation also may affect *OCBs*. Studies in this area are sparse. Therefore, identifying the negative effect of *HRM* practices empirically is needed. The present study addresses this gap through an empirical investigation into the *HRM* practices in respect of organizational justice among a sample from Sri Lankan organizations. This study takes into account the perceived organizational injustice (distributive injustice and procedural injustice) of Sri Lankan employees, and examines whether they have effects on organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, it also examine whether work alienation, which has not referred previously in organizational justice literature, have mediating effects on this relationship. Therefore, objectives of this study are (a) to investigate the effect of employees' perceptions of injustice on work alienation and *OCB* and (b) to explore the mediating role of work alienation to link employees' perceptions of injustice and *OCB*.

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II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

OCB is defined by Organ (1988) as behavior at an individual's discretion that is not directly or explicitly rewarded but that will help the fulfillment of the organization's objectives. Williams and Anderson (1991) organize *OCBs* into categories on the basis of the target or direction of the behavior. More specifically, they call behaviors directed toward the benefit of other individuals as *OCBI*, whereas behaviors directed toward the benefit of the organization are called *OCBO*.

On the other hand, the issue of organizational justice and its impacts on organizational outcomes is found to be significant. Greenberg (1987) defined organizational justice as employee perceptions of fairness in the workplace. It has shown to be associated with several outcomes such as job satisfaction, work motivation and work performance (Suliman, 2007), intention to turnover (Colquitt, et al., 2001), commitment (Folger & Konovsky, 1989), and organizational citizenship behavior (Moorman, 1991). Perception of justice in the workers may generate a state of mind with a positive attitude. This condition may in turn lead the workers to get engage in performing organizational citizenship behaviors (Williams, Pitre., & Zainuba, 2002). According to Asgari et al. (2008) when employee perceives justice practices they behave positively. Moorman (1991) emphasized that, organizational justice is regarding the organizational behaviors. Therefore, it makes sense that justice perception has positive relationship with *OCB*. In existing literature, organizational justice is categorized into three broad categories namely "distributive", "procedural", and "interactional" justice (Martinez-tur et al., 2006). While distributive justice is concerned with perceptions of fairness about organizational allocations and outcomes, procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the processes used to determine organizational outcomes (Colquitt, et al., 2001; Folger & Konovsky, 1989). It derives from the perceived equity of organizational policies and procedures determining resource allocation and other managerial decisions (Peele III, 2007). The present study considers only two dimensions of justice namely distributive justice and procedural justice. While justice perception influences *OCBs*, its influence becomes negative when an organization applies injustice practices.

Another important negative effect related with human resource practices is work alienation (*WA*). Work alienation at the workplace refers that employees may not be able to fulfill their social needs (Nasurdin, Ramayah, & Kumaresan, 2005) and they have a form of gap between perceptions of an objective work situation and their certain interests such as values, ideals, and desires (Lara & Rodriguez, 2007). Lara and Rodriguez (2007) states that, when an employee is not able to express him/ herself at work due to a loss of control work alienation occurs. Work alienation separates an employee from work and the workplace and shows lack of job involvement and organizational identification (Armstrong-Stassen, 2006). Berger et al. (2008) states, work alienation inhibit work characteristics such as limited decision making and minimal skill usage. Research in the area of work alienation has studied about its nature and predicting the antecedents and consequences of it such as isolation in organizations, organizational leadership, organizational

citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, drinking behavior, and satisfaction (Miller, 1975; Sarros et al., 2002; Banai & Reisel, 2007; Lara & Rodriguez, 2007; Banai, Reisel, & Probst, 2004; Bacharach & Aiken, 1979). Employees who alienated from work view their jobs instrumentally, avoid autonomy, responsibility, and higher status, and engage in non-work pursuits. They do not care personally participation in work processes and are not personally involve in work (Shepard, 1970).

The present study defines work alienation as a disconnection between a person and his or her work (Nair & Vohra, 2009). Work alienation is a multidimensional concept (Seeman, 1991). Two important dimensions of work alienation are powerlessness, and meaninglessness. Powerlessness at work is the sense of the employee that he or she does not have control over the way things are done at work (McKinlay & Marceau, 2011). Meaninglessness is the perception of employees that their work is not important or worthwhile, for instance because it has no value for society or for their own clients (Suarez-Mendoza, 2008). These two dimensions are considered the key dimensions of alienation in a work context, as they have a strong impact on work outcomes.

The two dimensions of work alienation, powerlessness and meaninglessness, are negatively related to organizational commitment and work effort (Chiok Foong Loke, 2001; Koberg et al., 1999; Laschinger & Grau, 2011). In an alienated work environment, workers neither control the work process nor do they participate in organizational decision-making. Having control or power over the way work is done has both an intrinsic as an extrinsic motivational role, which is likely to increase organization commitment and work effort (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Similarly, extra contribution by employees also may decrease. In organizations management mostly controls the distribution of resources. If employees have not the decision making power for resource allocation, they will feel there is an injustice in the distribution of resources and in the decision making processes, and will not accomplish their goals efficiently. Consequently they may reduce engagement in *OCBs*. According to Zellars et al. (2004) low procedural justice may cause employees to perceive little or no control, and these sense of powerlessness prevent him/her to take action against the source of stress or prevents one's engagement in *OCBs*. Employees who can influence their work environment may experience greater attachment to their organizations and may contribute beyond the role requirement. Powerlessness and organizational commitment are significantly and negatively associated. Organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are also significantly associated (Bakhshi et al., 2011). Therefore, powerlessness may discourage *OCBs*. Work alienation separates his/her from work environment and social interactions at work. *OCBs* are behavior which is more related to social interaction and mutual help. For this reason, work alienation tends to prevent one's engagement in *OCBs*.

Studies in general report a negative relationship between meaninglessness and job performance. May et al. (2004) showed that experienced meaninglessness was negatively related to employees' engagement in their work. Arnold et al.

(2007) reported a negative relationship between meaningfulness and job satisfaction, and work effort. Based on this, it is expected that, when employees feel that their job is meaningless, they show less organizational citizenship behavior and less work effort. Work alienation is found to be negatively associated with job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (Suarez-Mendoza, 2008). Alienation decreases the motivation of workers, psychologically separates them from work and acts to reduce work involvement. To date, substantial research has focused on the effects of work alienation on passive job performance, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (eg., Clark et al., 2010; Sulu et al., 2010). Passive performance indicators aim primarily at the functioning of the organization as it is at that present moment, where tasks are given. Conversely, active job performance focuses on self-starting and proactive behavior, spontaneous and going beyond given tasks such as OCBs. Passive performance indicators are only one aspect of performance. For instance, a passive performance indicator is job satisfaction. An employee can be very satisfied, but can do only what he or she is supposed to do, not going the extra mile. OCBs are the performance which go extra mile that is going beyond the role requirement. Effects of work alienation on OCBs is not been much studied (Suarez-Mendoza, 2008). Employee experiencing work alienation cannot go beyond the job description as they are powerless and their contribution is not meaningful. Moreover, in an alienated environment, employees may feel they are not valued. Employees feeling valued by their organization, are the most important for creating environments in which OCB occurs. Alienated employees tend not to engage in OCBs (Suarez-Mendoza, 2008). Alienated employees, an outcome of injustice practices, should only limit their work behavior to fulfilling compulsory tasks. In so doing, they may avoid engaging in extra role activities and will hinder their OCBO and OCBI.

Another study showed that procedural injustice was a significant predictor of destructive behavioral intentions (VanYperen et al. 2000). When a person is treated exclusive, differently or unfairly because of his or her group membership he or she often feels alienated and angry (Enshner, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001). As a result of the absence of autonomy and control in the workplace, workers may experience alienation (Kanungo, 1983). As a result alienated employees may in turn reduce their extra contribution towards organization or individuals. Therefore, it is possible to expect that organizational injustice practices lead to alienation and this may in turn lead to decrease the level of OCBO and OCBI. The conceptual framework of this study is depicted in the Figure 1.

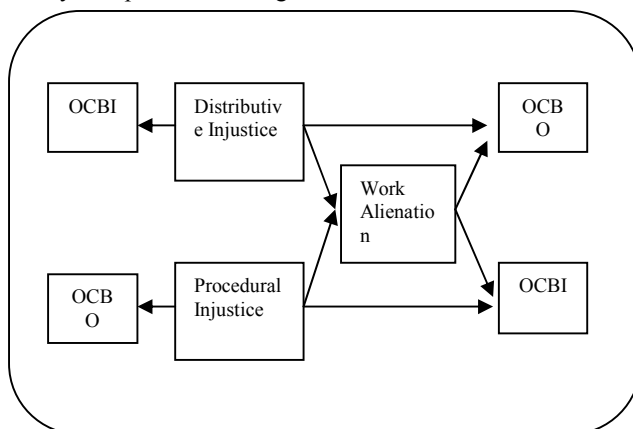


Figure 1: Mediating role of work alienation on the relationship between organizational injustice and OCB

In order to predict work behavior, researchers usually propose a social exchange explanation (Blau, 1964) whereby employees may exhibit positive or negative behavior as a response to the treatment received from their organizations (Greenberg & Scott, 1996; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). In this study organizational injustice perception may negatively influence OCBs. However, it has been suggested that the effect of the organizational injustice on OCB is likely to be indirect, and, hence, it may depend on the organizational injustice previous impact on work alienation. Based on the above argument, following hypotheses are developed,

- H1: Employees' perceptions of distributive injustice (DIJ) will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards organization (OCBO).
- H2: Employees' perceptions of procedural injustice (PIJ) will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards organizations (OCBO).
- H3: Employees' perceptions of distributive injustice will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards individuals (OCBI).
- H4: Employees' perceptions of procedural injustice will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards individuals (OCBI).
- H5: Employees' perceptions of distributive injustice will be positively associated with their perception of work alienation.
- H6: Employees' perceptions of procedural injustice will be positively associated with their perception of work alienation.
- H7: Employees' perception of work alienation will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards organization (OCBO).
- H8: Employees' perception of work alienation will be negatively associated with their OCB directed towards individuals (OCBI).
- H9: Employees' perception of work alienation mediates the relationship between employees' perceptions of distributive injustice and their OCB directed towards individuals (OCBI).
- H10: Employees' perception of work alienation mediates the relationship between employees' perceptions of procedural injustice and their OCB directed towards organizations (OCBO).

III. METHODS

Mottaz's (1981) original 14-item scale was used to assess felt work alienation (WA), which includes dimensions of powerlessness, and meaningfulness, (7-items for each). Lee and Allen's (2002) scale that measures OCBO and OCBI was used to measure OCB. Each participant was instructed to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = never, 7 = always). Of the 16 items on the scale, eight represent OCBI behaviors and eight represent OCBO behaviors.

Distributive injustice (DIJ) and procedural injustice (PIJ) were measured by using the 20-item scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). Distributive justice contained five items and procedural justice 15 items. This scale items have been adapted to negative statements in order to measure the degree of perceived distributive injustice and procedural injustice. *Distributive injustice* was measured the perceived

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injustice related to outcomes such as pay or promotion employees received from organization. Sample item was 'My outcome doesn't reflect the effort I have put into my work'. Procedural injustice was assessed with scale which referred to the procedures used to arrive at outcomes. A sample item included 'I am not able to express my views and feelings during those procedures'. Responses were noted on five point likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The inter-item consistency scores of distributive injustice ($\alpha=0.80$), procedural injustice ($\alpha=0.71$), OCBO ($\alpha=0.73$) OCBI (0.71) and work alienation ($\alpha=0.72$) were found to be adequate for the analysis purpose. Respondents were also asked about their demographic profile such as gender, age, marital status, education and job experience, etc. Data were collected from diverse organizations in the eastern province. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires 350 were distributed and after multiple follow ups resulted in 224(64%) statistically usable questionnaires.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In respect of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, female respondents were in majority (59%). For age, fifty six percent (126) were between 31 to 44 years. As regard marital status, 99% were married. Most of the respondents held bachelor degree (170) and only one percent (02) held master degree. Of the respondents, about 09 percent had job experience up to 5 years, 44 percent between 6 to 10 years, 30 percent between 11 to 15 years and 17 percent more than 15 years. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the main characteristics of the sample. Maximum, minimum, means, standard deviations, and inter correlations of the main variables were also calculated. Following the Baron and Kenny (1986) causal steps method simple and multiple linear regressions was used for testing the mediating role of work alienation.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main variables of the study. Results indicated that respondents perceive moderate levels of distributive injustice (M = 3.01)

and procedural injustice (M =3.00) as sources for work alienation. Results also showed that they experience moderate levels of work alienation (M = 3.04). Results also indicated that the respondents engage low level of OCBO (M=2.31) but moderate level of OCBI (M = 3.14). The reliability of the scale was measured through cronbach alpha and for each of the variables it was greater than .70 which is acceptable as studied by Nunnally, (1978).

Correlation results presented in Table 2 indicate that there was significant positive relationship between distributive injustice and work alienation ($r = .683, p<.01$). In addition, there was significant negative relationship between work alienation and OCBO ($r = -.523, p<.01$). In addition, it is also noted that a significant negative relationship between distributive injustice and OCBO ($r = -.491, p<.01$); negative relationship between procedural injustice and OCBO ($r = -.454, p<.01$) were found.

Further, a significant negative relationship between work alienation and OCBI ($r = -.444, p<.01$) was found. There was a significant negative relationship between distributive injustice and OCBO ($r = -.491, p<.01$). A similar negative relationship was found between procedural injustice and OCBI ($r = -.451, p<.01$). The results indicate that distributive injustice and procedural injustice as sources of work alienation are positively associated with work alienation. This supports H5 and H6, which stated that distributive injustice and procedural injustice are positively associated with work alienation. Results also indicate that distributive injustice and procedural injustice are negatively associated with OCBO and OCBI. This supports H1, H2, H3 and H4, which stated that distributive injustice and procedural injustice are negatively associated with OCBO and OCBI. Further, results show that work alienation negatively influences OCBO and OCBI. This supports H7 and H8, which stated that work alienation is negatively associated with OCBO and OCBI.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Inter-Correlations and Reliabilities of Studied Variables

	M	SD	DIJ	PIJ	WA	OCBO	OCBI
DIJ	3.01	1.13	(.801)				
PIJ	3.00	.776	.586(**)	(.711)			
WA	3.04	.742	.683(**)	.511(**)	(.721)		
OCBO	2.31	.782	-.491(**)	-.454(**)	-.523(**)	(.731)	
OCBI	3.14	.812	-.381(**)	-.451(**)	-.444(**)	.801(**)	(.715)

Note. ****p < .01**. DIJ = Distributive Injustice Perception; PIJ= Procedural Injustice Perception; WA=Work Alienation; OCBO = OCB towards organization; OCBI=OCB towards individual M=Mean; SD=Standard deviation. Reliabilities are in parenthesis

The results of the causal steps method for work alienation (distributive injustice-OCBO) and work alienation (distributive injustice-OCBI) are presented in Table 2. The beta value of distributive injustice-OCBO and distributive injustice-OCBI relationship in the first step was -.491 and -.381 (the total effect) respectively. The inclusion of work alienation in the third step reduced this beta value to -.157 and -.154 respectively. But remained significant (the direct effect). The indirect effect of distributive injustice on OCBO and OCBI were equal to the product of distributive injustice _ work alienation path and the work

alienation *_OCBO* path i.e. $(-.417) (.445) = -.185$. Since the direct effect was significantly different from zero therefore, it was concluded that work alienation partially mediated the relationship between distributive injustice and *OCBO* and *OCBI*.

Table 2: Results of the regression analysis of the mediating effect of Work Alienation on the relationship between Distributive Injustice and *OCBO/OCBI*

Causal Steps Analysis	R		R ²		R ² change		Beta	
	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI
Analysis one: OCB on DIJ	-.491	-.381	.241	.145			-.491**	-.381**
Analysis two: WA on DIJ	.683	.683	.466	.466			.683**	.683**
Analysis Three: Step 1: OCB on WA	-.523	-.444	.273	.197			-2.04**	-3.09
Step 2: OCB on DIJ	-.506	-.438	.256	.192	.017	.016	-.157*	-.154*

Note*= $p < .05$; **= $p < .01$; *DIJ* = *Distributive Injustice Perception*; *WA*=*Work Alienation*; *OCBO* = *Organizational citizenship behavior directed to Organization*; *OCBI*= *Organizational citizenship behavior directed to Individuals*

The results of the causal steps method for work alienation (procedural injustice-*OCBO* and *OCBI*) are presented in Table 3. The beta value of procedural injustice-*OCBO* and *OCBI* relationship in the first step was $-.454$ and $-.451$ (the total effect) respectively. The inclusion of work alienation in the third step reduced this beta value to $-.166$ and $-.161$ respectively, but remained significant (the direct effect). The indirect effect of procedural injustice on *OCBO* and *OCBI* were equal to the product of procedural injustice *_work alienation* path and the work alienation *_OCBO* and *OCBI* path i.e. $(-.410) (.467) = -.191$. Since the direct effect was significantly different from zero therefore, it was concluded that work alienation partially mediated the relationship between procedural injustice and *OCBO* and *OCBI*.

Table 3: Results of the regression analysis of the mediating effect of Work Alienation on the relationship between Procedural Injustice and *OCBO/OCBI*

Causal Steps Analysis	R		R ²		R ² change		Beta	
	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI	OCBO	OCBI
Analysis one: OCB on PIJ	-.454	-.451	.206	.203			-.454**	-.451**
Analysis two: WA on PIJ	.511	.511	.261	.261			.511**	.511**
Analysis Three: Step 1: OCB on WA	-.523	-.444	.273	.197			-1.77**	-1.76**
Step 2: OCB on PIJ	-.506	-.426	.257	.182	.016	.015	-.166*	-.161*

Note*= $p < .05$; **= $p < .01$; *PIJ* = *Procedural Injustice Perception*; *WA*=*Work Alienation*; *OCBO* = *Organizational citizenship behavior directed to Organization*; *OCBI*= *Organizational citizenship behavior directed to Individuals*

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Results support that organizational injustice is an antecedent of organizational citizenship behavior and also, in general, that the work alienation mediate this link. The model tested suggests organizational injustice predicts organizational citizenship behavior and that this relationship can be explained by the mediating role of work alienation. Understanding how organizational injustice is able to affect citizenship behavior suggests that actions designed to promote organizational justice may be useful for more efficiently managing employee work alienation, and, therefore, more powerfully eliciting organizational citizenship behavior in the workplace.

The results that distributive injustice and procedural injustice are negatively associated with *OCBO* and *OCBI* suggest that those employees who perceive high levels of distributive injustice and procedural injustice are tend to perform *OCBs*

very less. This would have negative consequences for both employees and organizations. The results that distributive injustice and procedural injustice are positively associated with work alienation suggest that those employees who perceive high levels of injustice are experiencing high work alienation. That means they may feel less powerful and less meaningful in respect of their work. This would have negative consequences on the organization.

The results that work alienation is negatively associated with *OCBs* suggest that those employees who are alienated at their work are less willing to engage in *OCBs*. This negative relationship between work alienation and *OCBs* would be negative situation and management should make every effort to reduce work alienation for their employees to enhance their *OCBs* to the organization. The results that work alienation mediates the effect of distributive injustice and procedural injustice on *OCBs* suggest that those employees who perceive high levels of injustice are experienced more work alienation

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with the job and consequently are less willing to engage OCBs. Both distributive injustice and procedural injustice significantly affect OCBs directly and indirectly via work alienation. Maintaining high perceptions of distributive justice and procedural justice among employees would most likely result in high OCBs.

The major finding of this research is that distributive injustice and procedural injustice as sources of work alienation negatively influence OCBs directly and indirectly via work alienation. High perceptions of injustice would most likely result in low OCBs and that in turn will have positive consequences for both employees and organizations. Therefore, employee's perception of injustice can be reduced by implementing justice practices at the workplace. Implementing justice practices in workplace is felt crucial for the efficient use of human resources in this 21st century.

LIMITATIONS AND AREA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

First, the study investigated the only effects of injustice namely, distributive injustice and procedural injustice. However, this study excluded other dimension of justice such as interactional justice and informational justice. Second, the study examined work alienation as a composite one and did not consider individual effect of dimensions of work alienation. Third, the study relied heavily on the use of questionnaire to collect the required data.

Several lines of research suggest themselves. First, a comparison between managerial and non-managerial clerical staff in terms of perceptions of organizational injustice and work alienation would be of interest. Second, a comparison between managers of public and private sector in terms of perceptions of justice practices would also be worthwhile. Third, the study of the impact of demographic variables on the perceptions of work alienation is of interest. Finally, a study analyzing the relationships between demographic variables, work alienation, and job behaviors would be of interest.

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