

The role of bullying in the development of organizational citizenship behaviors

Abstract

Social exchange theory (SET) constitutes the main theoretical framework for research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), its antecedents (interactional justice and affective commitment), and the circumstances that may exacerbate or weaken these relationships. In the context of the public system and using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), this study analyzes whether bullying at work weakens the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, considering the mediating role of affective commitment. The results show that bullying at work weakens the relationship between interactional justice and affective commitment, but the results do not support the moderating role of bullying at work in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. This article contributes to advancing knowledge of a complex phenomenon such as OCB, by analyzing how its main antecedents behave in the event of bullying at work.

Keywords: OCB; affective commitment; interactional justice; bullying at work; moderators; SEM.

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1. Introduction

Social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) constitutes the main theoretical framework for research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), its antecedents, and the contextual factors that influence these relationships (Moorman & Byrne, 2005).

OCB is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3). OCB includes behaviors that go beyond the legal obligations regarding a job position, such as helping overloaded co-workers, voluntarily taking on additional responsibilities, putting in extra hours, developing additional skills that are beneficial to the organization, or publicly defending the organization (Allen, Evans, & White, 2011; Organ et al., 2006). Therefore, OCB is important to the success of organizations and the people that work in them (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Maynes, & Spoelma, 2014). In this respect, meta-analyses have revealed that OCB is associated with various individual-level and unit-level outcomes such as profitability, productivity, product quality, and efficiency (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009).

In relation to the antecedents, previous studies have shown that job attitudes, positive affection, social support, positive leadership, or a supportive organizational climate can lead to OCB (Organ et al., 2006). Specifically, previous studies suggest that the nature of social exchange leads to the expectation that employees will perform voluntary activities that go beyond their job requirements when they perceive a fair treatment from the organization and will generate affective bonds toward the organization (Organ, 1988). Moorman and Byrne (2005) have delved into the relationship between justice perception and OCB according to SET. These authors consider that “perceptions of fair treatment from an organization or supervisor could represent an accounting of benefits received. Fair treatment may then invoke an obligation to

reciprocate” (2005, p. 361). Thus, the perception of a fair treatment from the organization may give employees a clear evidence of the appropriateness of having a social exchange relationship with a superior or with the organization itself. This cause-effect relationship between justice perception and OCB has been supported by several studies both at the level of organizational justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001) and at the level of interactional justice (Byrne, 2005; Chan & Lai, 2017; Otto & Mamatoğlu, 2015). In order to clarify the dynamics of this relationship, defined by Moorman and Byrne (2005) as a “black box,” these authors propose analyzing the role of mediating variables such as affective commitment. That is, they posit that interactional justice perception can lead the worker to generate an affective commitment toward the organization, which in turn results in the exercise of OCB that benefits both the organization and the employee. Furthermore, to obtain a more complete picture of the relationship between interactional justice, affective commitment, and OCB, Moorman and Byrne (2005) suggest incorporating potential moderators to the analysis that may strengthen or weaken these relationships. Some moderators such as exchange ideology (Ladd & Henry, 2000), role definition (Tepper, Lockhart, & Hoobler, 2001), power distance (Begley, McLee, Fang, & Li, 2002), or communication satisfaction (Chan & Lai, 2017) have already been studied. However, to date, no study has analyzed the moderating role of bullying at work in the relationship among the three variables already mentioned. Parzefall and Salin (2010) indicate that intimidated workers might perceive a psychological contract breach, which might negatively influence their attitudes and behaviors toward the organization. So, it is expected that employees suffering bullying at work are likely to perceive an unfair treatment, which would affect negatively their OCB either directly or by means of a lower affective commitment toward the organization. Therefore, in the context of public system, the purpose of this study is to analyze whether bullying at work weakens the relationship between interactional justice and

OCB, considering the mediating role of affective commitment. The data and hypotheses were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) that represents causal processes that generate observations of multiple variables (Bentler, 1988).

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, the results obtained contribute to forwarding the knowledge about extra-role behaviors; that is, the results support the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between interactional justice perception and OCB. In addition, a novel variable such as bullying at work is analyzed, thus enabling a better understanding of the dynamics that take place within the “black box” defined by Moorman and Byrne (2005). Second, the results can provide information for managers about the strategies to follow in order to foster the presence of OCB through the management and control of the organizational variables. Third, managers can learn to make better decisions concerning a clearer and more precise communication about the procedures implemented. In addition, they should implement a better conflict management strategy, which might prevent bullying at work.

The article is divided into several sections. Section 2 presents a review of the general literature with a focus on the links between interactional justice, affective commitment, bullying at work and OCB. Section 2 also states the hypotheses proposed in the study. Section 3 describes the data, method, measurement scales, and procedure followed in the study. Section 4 presents the results of the analysis. Section 5 discusses these results framing them in the existing literature, and proposes managerial implications. Finally, section 6 briefly outlines the conclusions and contributions of the study, its limitations, and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Interactional justice and OCB: The mediating role of affective commitment

In recent years, the scientific community has paid special attention to OCB because of the benefits it may provide both at individual and organizational level (Podsakoff et al., 2009). OCB emerges in the SET framework as a means of reciprocity between employees, who carry out this type of behavior when they perceive a fair treatment from their employer and decide against it when they perceive an unfair treatment (Organ, 1988); the latter situation leads to the original economic exchange relationship based on a legal contract signed by the parties (Moorman & Byrne, 2005). In other words, when personal efforts are fairly rewarded, employees are more willing to care and maintain the social exchange relationship by participating in activities that go beyond the contractual obligations of their jobs (Fournier, 2008) and that benefit the organization (Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002).

Previous research has already confirmed the positive effects of organizational justice perception on OCB (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Although all dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) are positively related to OCB (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008), previous studies confirm that interactional justice emerges as an important predictor of extra-role behaviors (Byrne, 2005; Chan & Lai, 2017; Colquitt et al., 2001; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Otto & Mamatoğlu, 2015). Therefore, interactional justice is thought to create social exchange relationships (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2003).

Interactional justice refers to the most human part of organizational practices (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) because it focuses on the quality of interpersonal treatment among individuals (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002) and on transparency in communication about decision making and the implementation of procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986). In social exchange situations, interactional justice perception in terms of honesty, respect, courtesy, accuracy of information, and immediacy of feedback is more important than distributive and procedural

justice perception (Sousa & Vala, 2002). Given that interactional justice refers to the quality of interpersonal relationships established between superiors and subordinates (Cropanzano et al., 2002), some researchers consider that interactional justice perceptions cause higher emotional and behavioral responses in employees than distributive or procedural justice perception (Bies & Moag, 1986). According to Masterson et al. (2000), supervisors who treat their employees equally, respectfully, and in a dignifying way are likely to engender high-quality leader-member exchange relationships. These relationships generate a high level of trust among them, which can lead to performing beyond their obligations in order to help each other. Conversely, in a situation of interactional injustice, the leader-member exchange relationship is deteriorated because the employee feels that his or her self-esteem is attacked, which can have a greater effect on his or her OCB than unfair procedures (Fournier, 2008).

Even though the positive and direct relationship between interactional justice and OCB seems evident, Moorman and Byrne (2005) recommend examining the dynamics within this relationship. To that purpose, the authors suggest analyzing the mediating role of variables such as affective commitment.

Affective commitment refers to the emotional connection, identification, and involvement of the individual with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Previous research has related affective commitment and interactional justice to OCB separately. Both meta-analytic studies (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002) and more recent studies on organizational commitment (Leow & Khong, 2009; López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez, & Piñeiro-Chousa, 2016; Masterson et al., 2000) have confirmed that interactional justice perception might increase employees' affective commitment. That is, employees reciprocate fair and just treatment from the organization with feelings of affective commitment (Baker, Hunt, & Andrews, 2006). In the same vein, positive relationships have been found

between affective commitment and OCB (Chênevert, Vandenberghe, & Tremblay, 2015; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Meyer et al., 2002). Furthermore, research has shown that affective commitment has a greater relevance for predicting OCB than normative (moral thing to do) or continuance (need to stay) commitment (Ng & Feldman, 2011). Employees who develop emotional bonds with the organization tend to go beyond the call of duty, displaying a greater level of OCB (Allen et al., 2011) because they are likely to feel a relational obligation to engage in behaviors that have positive consequences for both parties (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008).

Nevertheless, few studies consider affective commitment to be a possible mediator of the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. The study by Karriker and Williams (2009) could not confirm the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. However, Zoghbi (2008) focused on university lecturers and found out that affective commitment fully mediated the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, both for employees whose objective was to benefit a colleague and for those who aimed at benefiting the organization as a whole. On their part, Bilgin, Kuzey, Torlak, and Uyar (2015) analyzed a sample of hospitality employees and concluded that affective commitment partially mediated the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. Given these mixed results, research should analyze whether the positive exchanges with the organization motivate employees to increase not only their formal contributions to the organization (in-role behaviors), but also their extra-role behaviors (voluntary and spontaneous) through affective commitment (Cohen & Keren, 2008).

Considering previous research concerning the relationships among interactional justice, affective commitment, and OCB, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between interactional justice and OCB.

2.2. *The moderating role of bullying at work*

Apart from the mediating role of affective commitment, Moorman and Byrne (2005) suggest incorporating potential moderators to the analysis of the relationship between organizational justice and OCB that may strengthen or weaken this relationship. This study analyzes the moderating role of bullying at work not only in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, but also in the relationship between interactional justice and affective commitment.

According to Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2011, p. 22), bullying at work means “harassing, offending, or socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work. It is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts.” These negative behaviors include subtle actions such as gossiping, social isolation, persistent work criticism, or undervaluing a person’s work (Notelaers, Vermunt, Baillien, Einarsen, & De Witte, 2011).

To date, several studies have analyzed the effects of bullying at work on employees’ interactional justice perception, affective commitment, and OCB. Regarding justice perception, some authors analyze unfair relationships that entail a violation of norms, produce frustration and stress, cause negative effects, and attack the dignity and self-esteem of the employee. Those studies point out that those situations may become antecedents of bullying at work (Neuman & Baron, 2011). Different behaviors toward people may imply the violation of certain formal norms and may lead individuals to feel that they are being unfairly treated. Neuman and Keashly (2003) also relate justice perception to bullying at work and point out that interactional justice is the strongest predictor. On their part, Bowling and Beehr (2006) analyze the type of justice that has the closest relationship with bullying at work based on the victim’s attributed responsibility to the

behaviors that she or he suffers. Thus, if the victim blames the aggressor, interactional justice is resented, whereas when the victim blames the organization, distributive or procedural justice are affected the most. In this case, the immediate consequence will be a variation in the degree of performance and a decrease in the organizational commitment of the victim as a response to the degree of permissiveness shown by the organization toward the aggressor's behavior. More recently, other researchers have confirmed the negative relationship between interactional justice perception and the presence of bullying at work (Ahmad, 2018; Neuman & Baron, 2011; Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue, & Abe, 2010).

The negative relationship between bullying at work and organizational commitment in general (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Glasø & Notelaers, 2012), and affective commitment in particular (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009; López-Cabarcos et al., 2016; McCormack, Casimir, Djurkovic, & Yang, 2009), has also been proven by several research studies. Employees affected by processes of bullying at work feel that the organization is not looking after their wellbeing and protection, so affective links tend to break. As bullying affects the emotions of victims, it is deemed that bullying is strongly correlated with affective commitment (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009). Furthermore, suffering bullying at work hampers the victims' ability to interiorize objectives, values, and organizational goals, which lowers their identification with the organization (Ashforth & Male, 1989) and hence their organizational commitment (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004). More recently, Nielsen and Einarsen's (2012) meta-analysis shows the decrease in organizational commitment of employees as a direct consequence of bullying at work.

Although less numerous, some studies relate the presence of bullying at work to a decrease in OCB (Khalique, Arif, Siddiqui, & Kazmi, 2018; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Verdasca, 2015). When faced with a bullying situation at work, the victim may carry out some strategic

behaviors in order to defend him or herself from the interpersonal abuse; one such action is performing fewer extra-role behaviors (Verdasca, 2015). On the other hand, Zellars, Tepper, and Duffy (2002) revealed that high levels of abusive supervision (i.e. suffering intimidation, withholding necessary information, being humiliated) predict low OCB.

SET can also be an optimal theoretical framework to explain the effect of suffering psychological harassment at work on the victim's attitudes and behaviors within the organization because the victim assumes that the organization does not ensure his or her integrity, especially when the bullying continues after the organization has been informed (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). Previously, Spector and Fox (2002) presented an emotion-centered model of employee behavior to analyze the impact on individual performance (i.e. OCB) of a particular set of organizational conditions (i.e., social stressors) through their influence on emotions or on the employee's affective variables. Given that bullying at work is a social stressor, apart from the mentioned direct effects, it is expected to cause additional indirect effects that weaken the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, considering the mediating role of affective commitment. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2. Bullying at work moderates (weakens) the positive relationship between interactional justice and OCB.

H3. Bullying at work moderates (weakens) the positive relationship between interactional justice and affective commitment.

Figure 1 summarizes the proposed model.

Figure 1 here.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and data collection procedure

The data were obtained through a self-administered questionnaire to Spanish employees of five public institutions. An explanatory cover letter and questionnaire were distributed to 1,545 public employees, yielding 482 useable questionnaires (31.2% response rate). The majority of these respondents were male (82.9%) and in an age range of 35-49 years (80.5%). The vast majority were civil servants (96.4%) with 10 or fewer years of tenure (79.7%).

The data and the hypothesized relationships were analyzed using SEM and hierarchical multiple regression analysis with the statistical software 22.0 SPSS and AMOS package.

3.2. Measures

Interactional justice. The study used the four-item scale by Moliner, Martínez-Tur, and Carbonell (2003) to measure interactional justice ($\alpha = .87$). The items describe the employee's perception about justice of the treatment received on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Affective commitment. The study adopted a seven-item Allen and Meyer (1990) scale to measure affective commitment ($\alpha = .88$). The items describe the employee's desire to remain in the organization. The scale items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). This study employed a self-report measure of OCB based on a 24-item scale by Coyle-Shapiro (2002) ($\alpha = .82$). The items show the employees' evaluation regarding the performance of behaviors that go beyond what is expected of their formal duties. Following LePine, Erez, and Jonhson's (2002) suggestions, the items were aggregated to create a global OCB average on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Workplace bullying. The 29-item version of Hoel and Cooper's (2000) Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) was used to measure bullying at work ($\alpha = .88$). The NAQ is a self-reported measure of workplace bullying behaviors used to evaluate how often in the previous six months respondents have been subjected to a range of negative and subtle actions on a range from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*).

Control variables. Age and organizational tenure were used as control variables throughout the analysis.

3.3. *Evaluation of common method bias*

Data were collected from a single-sitting and a self-reporting measure. To determine the extent to which common method bias might be an issue, the procedure recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) was followed. A Harman's single-factor test was used to estimate common-method variance bias (Harman, 1967). The results revealed six factors with eigenvalues above 1.0, explaining 65.49% of the total variance, and the largest single factor explained 29.64% of the variance. Therefore, no single factor is responsible for most of the variance (Christmann, 2000). In order to supplement the above analysis, all the variables were loaded onto one factor in order to examine the fit of the confirmatory factor analysis model (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). The results concluded that the single-factor model did not fit data well: $\chi^2 (df) = 5152.203 (434)$, $p < .001$, GFI = .481, RMSEA = .149, TLI = .402, CFI = .442, $\chi^2 / df = 11.871$, and it was significantly worse than the fit of the measurement model identified earlier. Thus, there is no serious common method bias.

4. **Results**

4.1. *Descriptive statistics and correlations*

The means, standard deviations, simple correlations, and estimated reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) of the variables used in this study are presented in Table 1. All of them showed acceptable Cronbach's alpha values, higher than .60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The correlation results coincide with those presented in the literature. There are positive and significant correlations among interactional justice, affective commitment, and OCB; there are negative significant correlations among interactional justice, affective commitment, and OCB and workplace bullying.

Table 1 here.

4.2. *Measurement model*

The measurement model was estimated in accordance with the two-step procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The convergent validity analysis showed that all indicators loaded onto their respective latent factor significantly ($p < .001$) and substantially ($\lambda > .5$). Moreover, two additional indicators, namely composite reliability index and average variance extracted (AVE), were calculated in order to measure the scale's reliability. Both indicators exceeded the recommended minimum values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 1). Therefore, the scale's reliability was confirmed. Finally, discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the AVE with the squared correlations between constructs (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). In all cases, the AVE was greater than the squared correlation estimates. The goodness-of-fit indices of the model presented acceptable values: χ^2 (df) = 264.689(72), $p < .001$, GFI = .929, RMSEA = .074, TLI = .936, CFI = .949, χ^2 / df = 3.676.

4.3. *Structural model: Mediation*

The theoretical model shown in Figure 1 was tested (Model 1). In addition, the effects of age and job tenure on all the variables under study were estimated. The goodness-of-fit indices of the model presented good values: $\chi^2 (df) = 264.689(72)$, $p < .001$, GFI = .929, RMSEA = .074, TLI = .936, CFI = .949, $\chi^2 / df = 3.676$. Organizational tenure was significantly related to affective commitment only ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$), unlike age, which was not related to any variable. The structural paths between interactional justice and affective commitment ($\beta = .483$, $p < .001$), affective commitment and OCB ($\beta = .530$, $p < .001$), and interactional justice and OCB ($\beta = .271$, $p < .001$) were significant. In order to confirm that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, two additional models were proposed (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Table 2 presents the model-fit statistics and Table 3 shows the path coefficients of the three models. As shown in Table 3, the relationship between interactional justice and OCB is significant in Model 3 (direct effects), and remained significant even when affective commitment was considered (Model 1). The paths from interactional justice to affective commitment and from affective commitment to OCB remained significant in both models (partial and full mediation). In addition, the Sobel test (1982) was performed to assess the significance of the indirect effects of interactional justice on OCB through affective commitment. The test supported the partial mediating effect of affective commitment ($z = 8.3754$; $p < .001$). As shown in Table 2, the chi-square of Model 1 (partial mediation) ($\chi^2 = 264.689$, $df = 72$) was lower than the chi-square of Model 2 (full mediation) ($\chi^2 = 297.688$, $df = 73$) and the chi-square of Model 3 (direct effects) ($\chi^2 = 527.180$, $df = 74$), and significantly different in both cases ($\Delta \chi^2 = 32.999$, $\Delta df = 1$, *sig*; $\Delta \chi^2 = 262.491$, $\Delta df = 2$, *sig*). Some authors disagree on the fact that the final decision on mediation depends on the significance of a parameter (which is always a convention) and prefer to establish a criterion of analysis whereby part of the total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable owes to the mediation effect (Variance Accounted For: VAF).

The results showed a VAF value of .5117, so partial mediation was supported (VAF under .80) (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Therefore, the above results confirm Model 1 as the best choice. Thus, H1, which asserts that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, is supported.

Table 2 here.

Table 3 here.

4.4. *Moderating regression*

Step-wise hierarchical regression equations were used to determine whether bullying at work decreases the effects of interactional justice perception on affective commitment and OCB. Two hierarchy-moderated regressions were performed on the two dependent variables (affective commitment and OCB), considering workplace bullying as a moderator. Each regression analysis included the variables in four separate steps following Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). After centering the predictor variables (Dawson, 2014), different regression analyses were run.

Table 4 shows the results of the moderating regression that analyzes the interaction between interactional justice and workplace bullying on OCB. The standardized coefficients indicate that both the main effects of the independent variable (interactional justice) and those of the moderating variable (workplace bullying) are significant in the expected sense. There is a significant change in R^2 in both steps (.202 and .022, respectively, $p < 0.001$). However, in this case, the interaction between interactional justice and workplace bullying on OCB is not significant ($\beta = -.068$, *n.s.*), which contradicts H2.

Table 4 here.

Table 5 shows the results of the moderating regression that analyzes the interaction between interactional justice and workplace bullying on affective commitment. The standardized

coefficients indicate that both the main effects of the independent variable (interactional justice) and the effects of the moderating variable (workplace bullying) are significant with the expected sign. There is a significant change in R^2 in both steps (.150 and .075, respectively, $p < .001$). The results reveal that the interaction between interactional justice and workplace bullying on affective commitment is statistically significant ($\beta = -.081$, $p < .05$) and causes a significant change in R^2 . Therefore, H3 is supported.

Thus, the association between interactional justice and affective commitment differs depending on the level of workplace bullying; however, the way it differs is not completely clear. The interaction term has a negative coefficient; thus, the positive effect of interactional justice on affective commitment decreases as workplace bullying increases. However, the size and precise nature of this effect is not easy to perceive merely by examining the coefficients. Hence the effect was plotted for visual interpretation (Dawson, 2014). Figure 2 indicates that the relationship between interactional justice perception and affective commitment is always positive, but this positive effect is accentuated for individuals suffering comparatively lower levels of workplace bullying than other victims.

Table 5 here.

Figure 2 here.

5. Discussion and managerial implications

The objective of this article is twofold. On the one hand, it tests the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. On the other hand, it analyzes the moderating role of bullying at work in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB considering the mediating role of affective commitment.

Regarding the first objective, the results of the study show that affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between interactional justice and OCB, thus confirming the results obtained by Bilgin et al. (2015). This result suggests that, in order to obtain extra-role behaviors from employees, they should be treated in a fair, equitable, and honest way; furthermore, that treatment should generate affective links between employees and the organization, which would lead to increase OCB. Thus, the results confirm the direct and positive relationship between interactional justice and OCB; that is, the relationship between the employee's perception of fair, equal, and respectful treatment and the development of a social exchange relationship between the employee and the superior or the organization (Byrne, 2005; Chan & Lai, 2017; Otto & Mamatoğlu, 2015). Supervisors who manage to get their employees to perceive this equal, fair and respectful treatment are likely to engender high-quality leader-member exchange relationships with them, which lead both parties to go beyond the call of duty to help each other (Masterson et al., 2000). The results of the study are in line with studies that confirm the positive relationship between interactional justice and affective commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Leow & Khong, 2009; López-Cabarcos et al., 2016; Masterson et al., 2000) and between affective commitment and OCB (Chênevert et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 1993, 2002). These positive, direct relationships confirm three key issues. First, interactional justice emerges as an important predictor of extra-role behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2001). Employees treated honestly, respectfully, courteously, and who are provided with accurate information and immediate feedback, respond by creating a social exchange relationship with their superior or with the organization (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2003) that makes them perform beyond the formal duties stipulated in their contracts (Moorman & Byrne, 2005). Therefore, managers must design training programs for their supervisors related to the development of interpersonal, supervisory, and effective assessment skills. At the same time, supervisors should treat their subordinates

respectfully, using better communication practices to give clear and precise instructions for the development of their tasks. In addition, employees should be included in the decision-making processes, thus showing that they are cared for, and generating high-quality social-exchange relationships (Chan & Lai, 2017). Second, employees reciprocate fair and just treatment by the organization with feelings of affective commitment (Baker et al., 2006). Therefore, managers should pay special attention to the design of internal communication processes that transmit decisions in an honest, reasoned, and timely manner (Klendaue & Deller, 2009), while treating employees with equity, dignity, and respect (López-Cabarcos et al., 2016). Third, employees who develop affective links with the organization feel a relational obligation to engage in behaviors that go beyond the call of duty (Allen et al., 2011). When an organization's values, beliefs, philosophy, and behaviors are shared by all members and there is an excellent relationship among them, the effects on productivity and performance are outstanding (Karriker & Williams, 2009). This generates a supportive social climate where each member of the organization feels responsible for the wellbeing of his or her coworkers, which allows employees to perform their tasks efficiently and to stay healthy (Otto & Mamatoğlu, 2015). Therefore, managers should design strategies that promote affective commitment of employees toward the organizations' values through a fair, equitable, and employee-oriented leadership, which could motivate employees to show a cooperative behavior (Bilgin et al., 2015).

Regarding the second objective, the moderating role of bullying at work has been only partially tested. The results support the hypothesis that high levels of bullying at work damages the relationship between the employee's perception of a fair treatment from superiors and the development of an affective link with the organization. Compared to distributive or procedural justice, interactional justice is much more supervisor-focused (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Thus, employees who have good relationships with their superiors and perceive a fair, equitable,

honest, and courteous treatment toward them also perceive higher organizational support, which is represented by their supervisor (Otto & Mamatoğlu, 2015). This organizational support may favor a closer affective relationship between the employee and the organization (Baker et al., 2006; Leow & Khong, 2009; López-Cabarcos et al., 2016). However, suffering bullying at work may damage the relationship between interactional justice and affective commitment (Ahmad, 2018; Bulutlar & Öz, 2009; López-Cabarcos et al., 2016; McCormack et al., 2009; Neuman & Baron, 2011), because a high percentage of these processes are attributed to the superior (Einarsen et al., 2011; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2010). In this vein, previous research has shown that interactional justice perception, and not procedural or distributive justice, is affected when the victim blames the aggressor (in many cases, the superior) for the bullying at work suffered (Bowling & Beehr, 2006); in addition, affective commitment may be damaged according to the degree of permissiveness shown by the organization toward the aggressor's behavior (Galanaki, 2012; López-Cabarcos et al., 2016).

The results do not support the moderating role of bullying in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. Supervisors who manage to get their employees to perceive an equal, fair, and respectful treatment are likely to engender high-quality leader-member exchange relationships with them, which are reciprocated by their employees with OCB (Masterson et al., 2000). In this study, this exchange relationship is not affected by the presence of bullying at work, which could be explained by the measurement of OCB. Some authors distinguish two types of extra-role behavior depending on the beneficiary. OCBO implies that extra-role behaviors benefit the organization as a whole (e.g., informing of absences beforehand or complying with informal rules so as to maintain order). By contrast, OCBI implies that the extra-role behaviors benefit particular individuals and, indirectly, the organization (e.g., helping colleagues who have been absent or who have a high workload, making creative suggestions to

colleagues) (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Drawing from Williams and Anderson's OCBI measurement scale, some researchers have attempted to analyze extra-role behaviors that benefit superiors directly (OCBS) (Byrne, 2005; Masterson et al., 2000). These studies point out that interactional justice is directly related to extra-role attitudes and behaviors toward the supervisor (OCBI/OCBS), whereas procedural justice perception is directly related to attitudes and behaviors directed toward the organization as a whole (OCBO) (Masterson et al., 2000). Therefore, a victim facing bullying at work will probably stop performing extra-role behaviors that directly benefit his or her superior (OCBS), who can be identified as the aggressor. Furthermore, behaviors that benefit the organization as a whole will likely be affected (OCBO) because the organization did not ensure the victim's safety and wellbeing; however, behaviors that benefit coworkers (OCBI) will most likely remain unaltered, since the victim does not blame them for the unfair treatment received nor for the harassment suffered. The fact that this study measures OCB as an aggregate construct and does not differentiate the beneficiary of the behavior may explain why bullying at work does not moderate the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. In addition, some researchers point out that the victims of bullying at work may use OCB to acquire some power during the bullying at work processes that could help them endure the situation (Verdasca, 2015). These results indicate that there is much to be analyzed regarding the functioning of exchange relationships between workers and the organization, especially regarding moderating variables. What seems evident is that workplace bullying should be managed proactively to ensure a healthy and safe environment for employees (Ahmed, 2018). In this context, managers should design strategies that prevent workplace bullying by developing an organizational culture that leaves out these processes and by designing prevention policies and procedures. At individual level, employees should receive training about

conflict management strategies. These measures could help preserve the exchange relationship between employees and organization.

6. Conclusions

The results of the study suggest that treating employees on the basis of equity, honesty, and courtesy and implementing procedures that guarantee communication transparency regarding decision-making is insufficient to foster extra-role behaviors among employees. Managers should try to promote affective relationships between the organization and the employees and protect those relationships to ensure their continuity. To do so, managers should prevent bullying at work to avoid the damage of the relationship between the employee's perception regarding a fair, just, and respectful treatment and the affective relationship with the organization.

This study's main contribution is answering two fundamental questions posed by the scientific community (Moorman & Byrne, 2005). First, the study sheds light on the internal mechanism of the relationships between interactional justice and OCB by considering affective commitment as a mediating variable. Second, the study incorporates a variable that moderates the exchange relationship between employees and the organization that had not been previously tested: workplace bullying.

As any empirical study, this study has some limitations. Its cross-sectional survey design, which is based on the use of data collected from a single-sitting, self-reporting measure, could have led to a common method variance bias (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). As discussed earlier, several procedures were undertaken in order to minimize the effects and assess the scope of this problem, which is common to many social studies. Another limitation is that OCB was measured using a self-rated scale, which may lead to bias derived from participants' tendency to over-reporting their socially-desirable behavior (Karriker & Williams, 2009). As already commented,

the fact that the OCB scale has been used as a whole, without distinguishing behaviors that directly benefit the organization from those that benefit colleagues or superiors, may have partly affected the results obtained.

The results are consistent with previous research and create opportunities for further analysis. In this sense, future research should distinguish between behaviors that benefit the organization and those that benefit colleagues or superiors, to test more accurately the moderating role of different variables in the relationship between interactional justice and OCB. Thereby, the existing knowledge on exchange relationships would increase, including other types of perceived justice such as procedural justice, which is more closely related *a priori* to OCBO. Finally, it would be interesting to further the study of moderating variables, including variables directly related to the organization (leadership style or type of organizational culture) and / or to the individual (coping).

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Figure 1. Proposed model

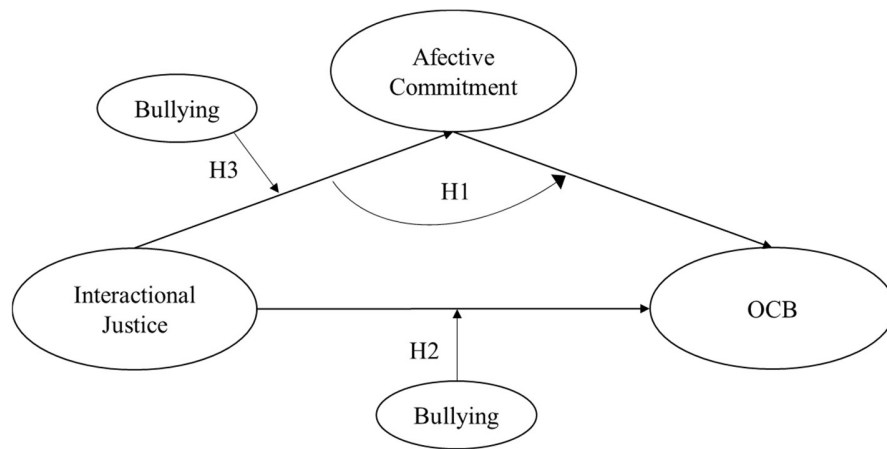


Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, AVE and composite reliability

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Age	Tenure	IJ	AC	OCB	Bullying	AVE	Composite reliability
Age	-	-	-						-	-
Tenure	-	-	.517**	-					-	-
IJ	2.9818	.87857	.104*	.076	.872				.633	.873
AC	3.0880	.78905	.158**	.168**	.404**	.884			.518	.881
OCB	3.2690	.81891	.096*	.032	.456**	.614**	.821		.610	.823
Bullying	1.5628	.54639	-.042	-.039	-.441**	-.424**	-.334**	.881	-	-

Note: N = 482. Variables: Interactional Justice (IJ); Affective Commitment (AC); Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB); Bullying at work (Bullying); Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Cronbach's α on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Fit results for structural equation models

	$\chi^2 (df)$	p	GFI	RMSEA	TLI	CFI	χ^2 / df
Model 1 (partial mediation)	264.689(72)	.000	.929	.074	.936	.949	3.676
Model 2 (full mediation)	297.688(73)	.000	.920	.079	.926	.941	4.078
Model 3 (direct effects)	527.180(74)	.000	.886	.112	.853	.880	7.124

Table 3. Structural equation path coefficients

	Standardized coefficients and (<i>t</i> -values)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Interactional justice → Affective commitment	.483(8.94)***	.509(9.60)***	
Affective commitment → OCB	.588(10.50)***	.736(17.12)***	
Interactional justice → OCB	.271(4.93)***		.553(12.02)***

Note: Model 1: partial mediation; Model 2: full mediation; Model 3: direct effects.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical moderated regression on organizational citizenship behaviors

Variables	Dependent variable: organizational citizenship behaviors			
	S1	S2	S3	S4
<i>Controls</i>				
Age	.109*	.069	.070	.073
Tenure	-.024	-.038	-.040	-.049
<i>Independent variable</i>				
Interactional justice		.452***	.378***	.382***
<i>Moderator</i>				
Bullying at work			-.166***	-.189***
<i>Interaction</i>				
Interactional justice x bullying at work				-.068
<i>F</i>	2.344	42.692***	36.345***	29.653***
Overall R^2	.010	.211	.234	.238
Adjusted R^2	.006	.206	.227	.229
Change in adjusted R^2	.010	.202***	.022***	.004

Note: S1, S2, S3, S4: Steps 1-4. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5. Hierarchical moderated regression on affective commitment

Variables	Dependent variable: affective commitment			
	S1	S2	S3	S4
<i>Controls</i>				
Age	.096	.062	.065	.069
Tenure	.119*	.107*	.104*	.093*
<i>Independent variable</i>				
Interactional justice		.389***	.255***	.259***
<i>Moderator</i>				
Bullying at work			-.305***	-.333***
<i>Interaction</i>				
Interactional justice x bullying at work				-.081*
<i>F</i>	8.737***	36.130***	41.832***	34.375***
Overall R^2	.035	.185	.260	.265
Adjusted R^2	.031	.180	.253	.258
Change in adjusted R^2	.035***	.150***	.075***	.006*

Note: S1, S2, S3, S4: Steps 1-4. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Graph of regression effects between interactional justice and affective commitment depending on different levels of bullying at work

