Deviant Behavior and Organizational Justice: Mediator Test for Organizational Cynicism— The Case of Pakistan

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Abstract: In this era of competition, it is no longer acceptable from the workforce to violate the norms of the work organization and being involved in destructive deviance. The consistent occurrence of destructive deviance not only affects individual performance, but it also deteriorates the performance of the organization as a whole. It is imperative for managers to know how to eliminate or at least mitigate the occurrence of such harmful behavior in the organization environment. Therefore, this study empirically examined the relationship between organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior by taking organizational cynicism as mediator. The study used equity theory and social exchange theory for the theoretical foundation. The population for the study consists of public sector employees of Pakistan. The study has three variables for which a single questionnaire has been employed. Data has been analyzed through correlation and regression analysis. Results revealed that: 1) organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior are negatively and significantly correlated; 2) organizational justice has a significant and negative correlation with organizational cynicism; 3) deviant workplace behavior has a significant and positive correlation with organizational cynicism; and 4) the organizational cynicism acts as a partial mediator between organizational justice and workplace deviance. It is concluded that organizational justice issues need to be tackled carefully in order to increase the morale of employees and to reduce the recurrence of negative behaviors. Management should keep in mind the concept of justice while developing policies and procedures for resources and rewards allocation.

Keywords: Organizational justice, workplace deviance, organizational cynicism, public sector of Pakistan.

Introduction

Every organization must maintain an environment of being beneficial to both organization and its member. The employer and employee are very cautious about their interests and expectations. If organization fails to fulfill the promises with its members, the exchange relationship disturbed which further results various negative outcomes. One among these organizational and contextual factors is organizational justice.As research demonstrated that fairness perception results a wide range of attitudinal, behavioral and emotional outcomes like job satisfaction (Suliman, 2007), employee commitment (Loi *et*

al., 2006) employee cynicism (Tayfur *et al.*, 2013;Bateman *et al.*, 1992) Turnover intention (Loi *et al.*, 2006) organization citizenship behavior (Moorman and Byrne, 2005) deviant workplace behavior (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997)emotional exhaustion (Frenkel *et al.*, 2012). Among these organizational cynicism and deviant work behavior is the very common (Sieh, 1987; Crino and Leap, 1989). Employees who confront with the organizational injustice tend to more mental distress (Robbins *et al.*, 2012) and burnout (Bakker *et al.*, 2000; Cropanzano *et al.*, 2005). Unfair treatment moreover made employees cynical towards their worked organization (Tayfur *et al.*, 2013).

The main objective, therefore, of this research article is that how organizational injustice explain the deviant work behavior with mediation of employee cynicism based on social exchange theory. Here the study deals with the mechanism of conversion of organizational injustice to deviant workplace behavior across employee cynicism. This research is innovative in a sense that it will provide a platform to manage negative attitudes and behaviors proactively. As Appelbaum, Iaconi and Matousek (2007) have argued that by knowing the reasons and causes of deviance at workplace will enable employers to decrease the occurrence and mitigate the adverse effects of such harmful behaviors. Therefore, this research is concern with study of initiatives and remedies of deviance not with the reactive mechanism.

Different studies have been conducted to explain the relationship of organizational justice and deviance at workplace. Some of them states that the relationship is not linear but there are various intervening variables which better explain the said relationship (Tekleab *et al.*, 2005). Some other studies go opposite and have proved the linear relationship between these two variables (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Masterson *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, in this article we inspect the mechanism of organizational injustice to deviance by enriching the model with the organizational cynicism as intervening variable. The model based on reciprocity role (Gouldner, 1960) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), explains the conversion of organizational injustice to negative attitudes (i,e., organizational cynicism) and the negative attitude later on converts into negative behaviors (i,e., deviant workplace behavior).

In Pakistan, the public sector is the largest sector of employment in which millions of employees are working but it has remained a target of criticism for years. This sector plays a vital role in a country development and national economy, but unfortunately in Pakistan the said sector confronts with many issues which are obstacles to go to peak. A number of these issues relate to employee negativeattitudes and behaviors such as employee cynicism, turnover intention, absenteeism, sabotage, retaliation and other similar negative attitudes and behaviors. In stated sector as compared to private sector employees become more involved in such negative attitudes and behaviors. The reason of holding such negative attitudes and being involved in such harmful behaviors may be the outputs of employer's injustice in resource

allocation, policies and procedures adopted and interaction with employees. Thus, it is necessary for the policy makers and administrators to effectively manage the public sector to know about the causes of employee's negative attitudes and behaviors. And provide the remedies to eliminate or at least mitigate the adverse effects of such negative attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, make the public sector organization able to provide an environment where the employees have and exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors and also to take benefit in long.

Literature Review

Organizational justice

Social scientists have recognized the idea of justice as a basic need for effective functioning of organization and as well as for individual employee. In time of its birth the term fairness was only stick with social interaction and not to organization in particular (Greenberg, 1990). Due to great practice of justice in organizational setting, after 80's the term fairness replaced by a well-recognized term organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987).Theory of organizational justice is concern with justice perception in work related matters. Based on this theory Greenberg (1990) has defined organizational justice as a concept that how employees perceive the fairness in treatment at work setting and how it affects the outcomes. Literature has many typologies of organizational justice, but this study focuses on three basic dimensions of organization justice.

Theorists (Greenberg, 1987; Bies *et al.*, 1986) have identified three dimensions of organizational justice. Conceptualizations of justice that focus on content (the fairness of outcomes achieved) is distributive justice approach, second concept concern with process (the fairness of the means through which these outcomes achieved) is procedural justice approach, third concept focus on how individuals treat fairly each other within organization while working to achieve these outcomes through means is interactional justice approach.

Deviant workplace behavior

Deviant workplace behavior is defined as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and by doing so employee harms the well-being of an organization, its members or both(Robinson and Bennett, 1995). The typology of Robinson and Bennett (1995) of deviant workplace behavior based on two dimensions. Dimension 1 is "minor verses serious deviance" and dimension 2 is "interpersonal verses organizational deviance" The first quadrant reflecting serious and organizationally harmful deviant acts it was labeled "property deviance". Property deviance defined as "those instances where employee acquires harm or damage the tangible property of work organization without authorization". The second quadrant reflecting relatively minor but still organizationally harmful deviant acts it was labeled "production

deviance". Production deviance defined as "behaviors that violate the formally proscribed norms delineating the minimum quality and quantity of work to be accomplished". The third quadrant reflecting minor and interpersonally harmful deviant acts it was labeled "political deviance". Political deviance defined as "engagement in a social interaction that puts other individuals at a personal or political disadvantage". The final quadrant reflecting serious and interpersonally harmful deviant acts it was labeled "personal aggression". Personal aggression defined as "behaving in an aggressive or hostile manner towards other individuals". This study deals with deviant workplace behaviorand alsofocuses on its both dimensions.

Organizational Justice and Deviant Work behavior

According to Adam (1965), people crosscheck their perceived work outputs to their perceived inputs and also compare the ratio of their perceived work outcomes and perceived work inputs to the ratio of other perceived work outputs to the perceived inputs. In case of feeling inequity, they feel frustration and resentment and become involved either in behavioral reactions (altering performance) or in psychological reactions (altering perception of work outcomes) (Greenberg, 1990). It has been suggested that organizational justice predicts not only positive outcomes (organizational commitment, organization citizenship behavior and job satisfaction) (Aly *et al.*, 2016; Shahzad *et al.*, 2014) but also a range of negative outcomes in form of deviant work behavior (Tardiness, Absenteeism and lack performance) (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 2006). Thus, organizational justice may be predictive of positive behaviors as well as of negative deviant behaviors. Based on equity theory, literature has found a relationship between organizational justice and deviant behavior. Researchers (e.g., Judge *et al.*, 2006; Adam, 1965; Greenberg, 1987) suggest that when organization decisions and management actions are deemed to be unfair or unjust, the affected employees tend to practice some negative behaviors that harm the organization welfare.

Distributive justice focus on content, the fairness of the outcomes allocated (Greenberg, 1987) that whether the allocations of outcomes based on justice or it have some equity issues. Employees react to balance or reestablish the justice when they perceived injustice in outcomes allocations. The reactions may be in form of retaliation as examined by Skarlicki and Folger (1997) that distributive justice predicts organization retaliation behavior. When procedural justice and interactional justice are low distributive justice has negative significant relationship with organization retaliation behavior(Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Employees perceived injustice in outcomes allocation (distributive injustice) are more likely to involve in equity restoration (Ambrose, 2002). As Adam (1965) stipulated that individuals (employees) deal within equity, try to readdress this perceived inequity by modifying their attitudes and behaviors. These modified attitudes and behaviors may

deteriorate achievement of organizational goals. A study, in which situational factors (injustice, job dissatisfaction, interpersonal conflict, situational constraints and poor leadership) were studied with workplace aggression, revealed that perceived injustice and outcomes/rewards allocation lead to reduce inputs of individual's employees or compelled them to involve in CWB such as workplace aggression (Hershcovis *et al.*, 2007). Hershcovis *et al.* (2007) noted that distributive injustice lead to supervisor and organization target aggressions. Distributive injustice as a predictor of retaliation behavior, work aggression may also a cause of workplace theft a form of deviant workplace behavior. (Beugre, 2005) pointed out that employees who perceived unfairness in organizational reward system steal more as compared to those who perceived it fair. To readdress the inequity in reward system, employees display dysfunctional behaviors, the target of these behaviors may be both individual and organization (Beugre, 2005). Greenberg and Barling (1999) also noted that inequity in reward system lead to stealing from company. Unfair treatment while allocating rewards, result employees displaying theft a form of deviant workplace behavior. Employees perceiving unfairness in their pay reduction tend to be involved in some negative affective reactions towards organization such as theft. Dupre and Barling (2003) asserts that unfair treatment is one of situational factors may lead to unpleasant thoughts and feeling which further result to workplace aggression, outrage and resentment. When employee perceived mistreatment in reward allocation, they tend to retaliate against organization or supervisor in order to re-establish a sense of justice. Demore, Fisher and Baren (1988) used equity control model to conceptualize vandalism a form of deviant workplace behavior in college student, they have found that perception of low equity predicts high vandalism. The above literature shows that distributive injustice encountereddeviant workplace behavior either in form of organizational deviance or interpersonal deviance.

Procedural Justice focuses on process, means through which ends are achieved (Greenberg, 1990). It concerns with fairness in organizational rules and policies. Each organization have some specific rules and policies, when employees perceived unfairness in these rules and policies, they tend to break these specific rules and policies intentionally (Litzky *et al.*, 2006). It shows that unfair rules and policies (procedural justice) results voluntary discretionary behaviors such as retaliation behaviors (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Employees affected by unfair treatment of procedures, feels frustration due to which they practice workplace aggression at workplace (Hershcovis *et al.*, 2007). In order to readdress the perceived inequity in procedures employees practice some negative actions against organization welfare. These actions may in form of theft, aggression, sabotage, withdrawal and bullying (Kelloway *et al.*, 2010). Procedural justice as studied with negative emotions, organizational counterproductive work behavior and personal counterproductive work behavior results findings which supports above literature. The authors have

found that procedural justice has significant relationship to negative emotions (r=.44), organizational CWB (r=.26) and personal CWB (r=.15).Above literature revealed that like distributive injustice, procedural injustice may lead to WDB.

Greenberg (1990) defined interactional justice as how someone treat by others either subordinates or supervisor within organization. Treating individuals fairly felt them, that they are valuable, while with unfair treatment individual (employees) felt frustration and tension. Furthermore, this frustration and tension made employees to react in response of this perceived unfairness. The response is usually in form of negative behaviors (Beugre, 2005). A study have mentioned that interactional justice is a most frequent cause of workplace sabotage, when source of injustice is interactional, individuals are more likely to involved in retaliation (Ambrose, 2002). Being a family member of organizational justice interactional justice has negative relationship with deviant work behavior (Judge *et al.*, 2006). The one component is interpersonal justice; it refers to the perception of fairness while treating by others. So, if supervisor-subordinates relationship is not fair a form of Deviant Work behaviorwork aggression came into place (Hershcovis *et al.*, 2007). In light of above reviewed literature the study proposed the following hypotheses:

>   **H1:** *Organizational justice would have negative and significant relationship with deviant workplace behavior.*

Integration of the organizational cynicism to better understand the relationship of justice/deviance: the norm of negative reciprocity and social exchange theory as a theoretical support

Social exchange relationships often practiced between the leader and subordinate. If the subordinate is willing to build such a relationship, he or she tends to show positive attitudes and behaviors(Cropanzano *et al.*, 2008). This research therefore used a simple model for the growing of high-quality exchange relationships between employers and employees(Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). And if the exchange relationships disturbed due to some factors the employees treated the worked organization and its members with negative attitudes and behaviors. As the norm of reciprocity state that "A negative reciprocity orientation involves the tendency to return negative treatment for negative treatment; a positive reciprocity orientation involves the tendency to return positive treatment for positive treatment" (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2004). Based on these two notions a perceived injustice disturbed directly the employee's exchange relationship with the employer leading to a difference between the expectations and the actual received compensation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).According toSettoon, Bennett, &Liden,**(**1996**)**social exchange ideology has been used to explain various positive attitudes and behaviors like employee commitment and Citizenship behaviors. In contrast, it is argued

that in case of poor social exchange relationships the output may be in form of negative attitudes, such as cynicism. Specifically, organizational cynicism as a prompt response to poor social exchange relationships in worked organization (Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). They further argued that while violating the specific promises to the employee, and are not fulfilling of generalized expectations, leads to cynicism.

Organizational Justice and cynicism

Fairness perception has been proved to be an important predictor of employee negative as well as positive attitudes and behaviors within organization (Masterson *et al.*, 2000). Research has showed that employees are concerned about the resource allocation, the procedures adopted in its allocation, and the attitude and behavior exposed during its allocation by supervisor. Therefore, organizational (In) justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) may affect employee behavior and attitude.

Various studies have been shown that if employees perceive injustice at any of the above three stages are likely to experience feelings ofresentment, outrage, and even anger (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Reactive content theory of justice asserts, that individuals response to unfair treatment in workplace accordingly (Homans, 1961, Adam, 1965). Based on this notion perceived injustice can be better explained the negative outcomes (Walster *et al.*, 1978). According to this theory of justice individuals practice mostly negative attitudes while confronting to unfair treatment in work setting. The perceived injustice thus provokes employees to have cynical attitudes towards their work organization. The perceived injustice further results feelings of distrust and frustration (Bateman *et al.* (1992). Consequently, perceived injustice across organizational cynicism evoke various negative behaviors such as employee theft (Greenberg, 1990), absenteeism (Hulin, 1991) resentment, outrage, and even anger (Skarlicki *et al.*, 1999).

> **H2:** *Organizational justice would have negative and significant relationship with employee cynicism*

Deviant behavior and employee cynicism

The literature has demonstrated many reasons of employees being involved in deviant workplace behavior such as perceived injustice, employee dissatisfaction and role modeling. Employees being involved in such harmful behaviors have something wrong in their minds. Therefore, we argued that employee cynicism compelled employees to show deviant workplace behavior. Employees while committed to work organization expect something same in response, but when they perceived that the organization is not treating them as they expect, a negative attitudebuilt in their mind regarding integrity of and trust on organization (Mijani and Rahbar, 2016). Eventually they become

cynical towards the work organization and these cynical attitudesafter a stage converts to practical harmful behaviors like theft, absenteeism, aggression (Mijani and Rahbar, 2016). As demonstrated by Abraham (2000) that many organizational and contextual factors affect the attitudes and behavior of employees. He further argued that while not feeling met their promises employees become cynical towards organization. Thus,in light of above literature this study proposed the following hypothesis.

H3: *There is a positive relationship between employee cynicism and deviant behavior.*

H4: *Employee cynicism plays the role of mediator in the relationship of organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior.*

Theoretical Framework

It is the logical representation of relationship among different variables based on established theories and literature. It gives the explicit picture of the relationships of variables and also their directions.
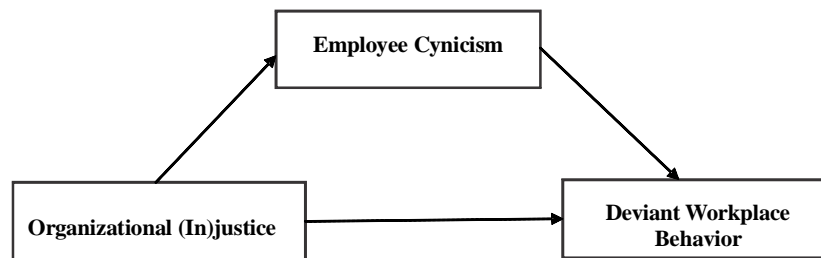
Methodology

The most commonly used scale for devaint behavior is that devloped by (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). It has two dimenssion, the interpersonal and organizational deviance. The scale used for interpersonal deviance is consist of 7 items while the scale for measuring organizational deviance is consist of 12 items.The scale adopted for measuring organizational justice was that of Niehoff and Moorman (1993). It consists of twenty items. The scale of organizational cynicism of Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998) is most widely used scale in recent research to measure organizational cynicism. This one-dimensional scale contains twelve items.Thequestionnaire was personally administered to the employees of the concerned organizations. A total number of 160 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 137 were received back, making response rate as 85 percent.

The population for this study was the public sector employees of Pakistan. A sample of 160 was selected. The sampling technique used for this study was

convenient. The sample was representative of population based on various characteristics as given in Table I.

Table I

Section	No of employees	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	98	72
Female	39	28
Marital status		
Single	55	40
Married	82	60
Qualification		
Intermediate-Bachelor	13	9
Masters	109	79
MS/M Phil	11	8
Ph D	4	2
Age (years)		
< 30	46	33
31 – 50	82	59
50 +	9	6

Findings

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of the research are given in Table II. The value of reliability is 0.71. This value lies in acceptable range and the research could be moved for further analysis (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). This table also shows the values of correlation between variables. Organizational justice is negatively and significantly correlated with deviant workplace behavior (r= - 0.291**) and is significantly and negatively correlated with organizational cynicism (r= - 0.421**). Organizational cynicism has significant and positive correlation (r= 0.504**) with deviant workplace behavior. The correlation between variables is imperative because it shows that a possible causal relationship might exist between deviant workplace behavior and other study variables in the reported direction.

Table 2: Summary statistics

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Organizational Justice	3.7826	1.06423	1.000		
2: Deviant Behavior	2.1168	1.05322	-.291**	1.000	
3: Organizational Cynicism	2.3604	1.03133	-.421**	.504**	1.000

Note: * = p < 0.05 level (2-tailed) & ** = p < 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Baron and Kenny (1986) approach has been used for mediation analysis. This approach cosists of with four necessary conditions. First, the independent variable and dependent variable must be correlated. Second, the independent variable must also be correlated with mediator. Third, there must

be correlation between mediator and dependent variable. Fourth, the independent variable must have correlation with the dependent variable after inclusion of mediator in the model. Full mediation will exist, if with inclusion of predictor and mediator in the model the relationship of independent and dependent variables become non-significant. For partial mediation this relationship must be significant, but to a lesser degree.

Table 3: Regression Analyses

Predictors	Organizational cynicism			Deviant behavior		
	β	t	significant	β	t	Significant
Path c						
OJ with DWB				-.291	-3.530	.001
Path a						
OJ with OCY	-.421 .000	-5.397				
Path b						
DWB & OCY	.504	6.789	.000			
Path c'						
DWB & with OJ				-.095	-1.161	.248

Note: * = p < 0.05 level (2-tailed) & ** = p < 0.01 level (2-tailed). OJ= Organizational justice, DWB= Deviant workplace behavior, OCY= Organizational cynicism

To support the path c the table 3.0 shows that organizational justice is negatively and significantly related with deviant workplace behavior with t = -3.530 and beta (β = -0.291, ρ< 0.05). Organizational justice has a negative significant relationship with organizational cynicism with t = -5.397 and beta (β = -0.421, ρ< 0.05) which support path a. To support path b organizational cynicism is positively and significantly related with deviant workplace behavior with t = 6.789 and beta (β = -0.504, ρ< 0.05). To support the path c' the relationship of organizational justice with deviant workplace behavior with t = -1.161 and beta (β = -0.095, ρ< 0.05) is no longer significant. Both the values of t statistic and beta reduced from t = -3.530 and beta (β = -0.291, ρ< 0.05 to t = -1.161 and beta (β = -0.095, ρ< 0.05 respectively and the relationship become non-significant. This shows that the organizational cynicism fully mediates the relationship between organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior.

Discussion

The results indicate that employee cynicism is a full mediator between the relationship of organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior. It means employee's consistent perception of unfairness in resource allocation, policies

and procedures and interactions built a firm belief in his/her mind that their organization lack integrity. Along with such belief they also have negative affect towards the organization and tendencies disparaging and critical behaviors consistent to these beliefs and affects. Based on the norm of reciprocity these negative intentions appeared in the form of deviant workplace behaviors like gossiping at the time of work, lateness, theft, absenteeism, wasting organizational resources etc.While practicing such behaviors the employees intentionally harm the organization and its members or both.The issue of unfairness is very common in public sector of Pakistan. The rewards are only given to those employees who have strong ties to top management. Moreover, the procedures adopted for such allocation are also unjust. Furthermore, the top management treated some specific employees with dignity and respect while ignoring the others. Therefore, in such scenario the ignored or suffered employees perceive that their organization lacks integrity. To belief so they mostly become involved in discretionary harmful behaviors. The findings of this study is consistent with the findings of Nasir& Bashir (2012).

The management must consider justice in resource allocation, policies and procedure followed in such allocation and in interactions with sub ordinates withfirst priority and immense interest. It will enable employees to keep positive attitudes towards their work organization like commitment, satisfaction and motivation etc. Furthermore they would be able to practice positive behaviors like organizational citizenship, innovation and creativity etc.It means to manage deviant workplace behavior proactively top management should consider justice in all aspects of the organization.

Implications and Limitations

The study would be having a number of implications. Theoretically this studyhas taken organizational justice, deviant workplace behaviors, and organizational cynicism in one model. The model is also novel in Pakistani context. This will add more to the literature oforganizational justiceand deviant workplace behavior. On the practical side, the findings of this research will help managers to consider the fairness in reward system, policies and procedures and in interactions with other members with immense interest, and deal practically with this concept. The findings will also help management to develop and implement justice, based policies and therefore it would make them able to manage deviant workplace behavior proactively. As a result, it is hoped that destructive behaviors in workplace will be at least mitigated. It also contributes theoretically that unfair practices in organization not only deteriorate individual interests but also overall organizational goals. Keeping in view the norm of reciprocity, when employees perceive justice in all aspects of the organization they react positively. They tend to practice positive attitudes and behaviors such as commitment, cooperation, loyalty and organizational

citizenship behavior. The results also warn management that if they failed to cope with justice factor in organization things might be worse for them as well as for others. As has been mentioned, the public sector of Pakistan is mostly exposed to deviant workplace behavior; therefore, the study informs the reader about the reasons and also underlies the remedies to address the same.

Like other social science research this study also has some limitations. First, due to small sample size the results have generalizability issue. It is a perception-based study and might carry some inbuilt limitations of subjectivity. The contextual factors may also affect the responses of the employees. The responses of those participants who are not interested in the study might have biased opinion regarding study called "common method variance". This model is not restricted or exceptional one. A number of other variables like perceived organizational support, trust in organization, intrinsic motivation, affective commitment etc. could be added to make the model more meaningful and holistic. In addition, they could also be tested as moderators and mediators.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The study investigated the impact of organizational justice on deviant workplace behaviorby taking organizational cynicism as mediator. Although numerous factors have been studied being predictors of deviant workplace behavior. However, among them organizational justice occupies central place. This research presented a model that embodied the relationship of organizational justice with deviant workplace behavior with the mediating role of employee cynicism. The model was empirically tested through data collected from public sector organizations. The results revealed that organizational justice have a negative and significant relationship with deviant workplace behavior with full mediation of employee cynicism. Additionally, there is a wide scope for studying organizational justice with possible positive outcomes with factors like organization citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and commitment, engagement, loyalty, motivation and job performance. So, this study can be further elaborated by changing dependent or mediating variables.

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