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Performance appraisal and unethical behavior: A quasi-experimental study

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june, 2023



CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

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Granny, my big love, I know you're proud of your favorite. Love you and miss you.

Acknowledgements

It wouldn't make sense if this hadn't been a challenge that put my courage, resilience, commitment and dedication to the test. There were good and less good moments that made me grow and overcome myself at every moment. It wouldn't be like this if I hadn't had incredible people by my side to give me all the support I needed, to whom I must express my gratitude.

To my parents, who have always supported me, believed in me and given me the strength to carry on. They are my pillar and my haven. Without you I was nothing and this achievement is as much yours as mine. Thanks for all the efforts and for all the love, it's reciprocal.

To my supervisor Eduardo Simões, for his patience and for sharing so much knowledge. That in the most difficult moments, he kept calm to guide me on the right path and has been incredibly helpful throughout the entire process.

To Rafael, because this path was made hand in hand and I can only thank you for all the love, motivation, encouragement, support and so many other things. Thank you for believing in me so much, much more than I do myself, and always being by my side.

To Vanessa and Luiza, for their availability, help, long hours of podcasts, for listening to my outbursts and looking for solutions with me at any time. For the motivation and friendly shoulder. You were fundamental and honestly I don't even know the right words to thank you.

To friends and colleagues, who did not let me lose my way, for their empathy, for all the incentives and wishes of strength.

A thank you to everyone who made available part of their time to respond to the questionnaire.

A final thank you to everyone who crossed my path and made it so special, with a special mention to Daniela.

Resumo

Recentemente existe um foco crescente no comportamento antiético em contexto organizacional e nas respectivas consequências negativas que advêm para a sociedade. A avaliação de desempenho é reconhecida como uma preocupação significativa no campo da psicologia organizacional. Envolve medir e avaliar o comportamento e conquistas dos funcionários. No entanto, estes muitas vezes expressam insatisfação com o processo de avaliação, levando a reclamações e críticas. Procurámos compreender de que forma o modo como a avaliação de desempenho é percebida pode influenciar a intenção de comportamentos antiéticos. Uma metodologia quase-experimental manipulou a percepção da avaliação de desempenho (positiva vs. negativa) e infraestrutura ética (forte vs. fraca). Os resultados indicam que a percepção positiva da avaliação de desempenho e uma forte infraestrutura ética têm efeitos negativos e independentes sobre a propensão ao comportamento antiético, o que sugere que separadamente contribuem para a ética no local de trabalho. Posteriormente, foram explorados os mecanismos que contribuem para esta relação, nomeadamente, justiça percebida e suporte percebido do supervisor. A relação entre avaliação de desempenho e comportamento antiético é sequencialmente mediada por estas variáveis, demonstrando que as pessoas tendem a perceber os supervisores como apoiantes quando têm uma percepção positiva e justa do processo de avaliação de desempenho, diminuindo a probabilidade de agir de forma antiética. Este estudo representa uma valiosa contribuição para a limitada literatura empírica existente sobre a avaliação de desempenho e ética organizacional. Destaca-se a relevância atribuída a este tema para pesquisas futuras, considerando as consequências adversas que tais comportamentos podem acarretar para as Organizações.

Palavras-chave: avaliação de desempenho, infraestrutura ética, justiça percebida, suporte percebido do supervisor, comportamento antiético

Classificação APA PsycINFO:

3600 Psicologia Organizacional e Recursos Humanos

3630 Avaliação de Pessoal e Desempenho no Trabalho

Abstract

Recently there has been an increasing focus on unethical behavior in an organizational context and the respective negative consequences that arise for society. Performance appraisal is recognized as a significant concern in the field of organizational psychology. It involves measuring and evaluating employee behavior and achievement. However, employees often express dissatisfaction with the assessment process, leading to complaints and criticism. We aimed to understand how performance appraisal can influence unethical behavior intention. A quasi-experimental methodology manipulated the perception of the performance appraisal (positive vs. negative) and the ethical infrastructure (strong vs. weak). Results indicate that positive perception of performance appraisal and a strong ethical infrastructure have independent negative effects on the propensity for unethical behavior, which suggest that separately both contribute to ethicality in the workplace. Subsequently, the mechanisms that contribute to this relationship were explored, namely, perceived justice and perceived supervisor support. The relationship between performance appraisal and unethical behavior is sequentially mediated by these variables, which indicates that people are inclined to perceive their supervisors as supportive when they have a positive and fair perception of the performance appraisal process, reducing their likelihood of acting unethically. This study represents a valuable contribution to the limited empirical literature on performance appraisal and organizational ethics. The relevance attributed to this topic for future research is highlighted, considering the adverse consequences that such behaviors can have for organizations.

Keywords: performance appraisal, ethical infrastructure, perceived justice, perceived supervisor support, unethical behavior

APA PsycINFO Classification:

3600 Organizational Psychology & Human Resources

3630 Personnel Evaluation & Job Performance

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Index of Acronyms

EB – Ethical Behavior

EI – Ethical Infrastructure

HRM – Human Resources Management

MI – Moral Identity

PA – Performance Appraisal

PAI – Performance Appraisal Interview

PJ – Perceived Justice

PPA – Perception of Performance Appraisal

PSS – Perceived Supervisor Support

UB – Unethical Behavior

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing concern about unethical behavior (UB) within organizations and their detrimental effects on individuals, groups, and society, as it poses a significant risk to an organization's reputation (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). Instances of fraud, corruption, or dishonesty can tarnish an organization's image and erode public trust (Boyd & Edwards, 1998). Hence, studying UB is crucial for identifying potential risks, implementing effective controls, and developing mechanisms to address and mitigate unethical conduct, thereby safeguarding an organization's reputation. Therefore, social and organizational psychology seeks to comprehend the mechanisms behind the reasons why workers behave ethically or unethically (De Cremer & Moore, 2020).

Understanding UB is essential for organizations to comply with legal and regulatory frameworks (Treviño et al., 2006). Studying these behaviors helps identify potential breaches, establish robust compliance systems, and ensure adherence to ethical standards, reducing the risk of legal repercussions and penalties. UB can harm the organization's external stakeholders, affecting customers and suppliers. Hence, understanding the impact of UB facilitates the development of strategies and initiatives that address stakeholder concerns ethically, promoting positive stakeholder relationships and sustainable business practices (De Cremer & Moore, 2020). Ethical leaders play a critical role in influencing employee behavior, making morally sound decisions, and fostering a culture of ethical conduct (Treviño et al., 2006). By knowing UB organizations can develop and nurture ethical leadership competencies, leading to improved organizational ethics and decision-making processes.

The decisions that employees make at work have ethical implications (Treviño & Brown, 2004). Making ethical decisions is a complicated process and presupposes engaging in ethical behavior (EB) (Antes et al., 2007). By disseminating codes of conduct, providing training, setting behavioral norms, and keeping an eye on employees' ethical decision-making, organizations prospect to influence the behavior of their workforce (Brown et al., 2005). The presence of an ethical infrastructure (EI) within an organization can have an impact on how individuals behave when faced with ethical dilemmas. It is important to note that the relationship between EI and EB is not always straightforward but can be inferred that a robust EI is associated with a higher likelihood of EB (Simões et al., 2019).

One challenging aspect of human resource management (HRM) is performance appraisal (PA) (Na-Nan et al., 2020). PA has occupied a prominent position in the realm of organizational psychology research since its inception as a distinct field of study (Caetano, 1996). PA is a structured and regular assessment that objectively evaluates an employee's current job performance and potential for future improvement (Sabiu et al., 2018). It is a multifaceted practice, well known for its complexity (Roberts, 2003). It serves as a mechanism to evaluate employees' job performance in alignment with organizational expectations (Na-Nan et al., 2020). When employees perceive PA as unfair, it can have a detrimental effect on their attitudes and performance, reducing their motivation and productivity (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). The opportunity to provide performance feedback, decide on a foundation for promotions and salaries, and talk about employees' career goals is provided by appraisals for managers (Caetano, 1996). These initiatives have significant effects on employees' standing within the company and their professional growth, which in turn influences their attitudes and behaviors at work (Mayer & Davis 1999). Hence, when this process is negatively perceived it can lead to UB Therefore, it's crucial the perception that employees have regarding their appraisals.

It is widely acknowledged that employees' perception of justice in the performance appraisal process and their perceived supervisor support (PSS) are crucial factors influencing their behavior and attitudes toward the organization (Colquitt et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 2002). Understanding the ethical dimensions of PA can provide valuable insights into the design and implementation of appraisal systems that promote fairness, transparency, and ethical conduct (Arvey & Murphy, 1998).

In this sense, the purpose of this study is to understand the role played by PA in ethical/unethical behavior in the organization. There is limited research examining the connection between PA and individuals' ethical behavior within organizations, with only a few notable exceptions (*e.g.*, Jacobs et al., 2014). The findings of this study may inform organizational leaders and human resource professionals in developing strategies and interventions to enhance ethical practices in PA, leading to improved organizational performance and employee well-being.

This study follows the following structure: in chapter 1 the literature review will be exposed considering the relevant topics and in chapter 2 the study will be explained, and the hypotheses, results, discussion, and conclusions will be presented.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical framework

1.1. Ethical and unethical behavior in organizations

Unethical behaviors in organizations have become a subject of interest (De Cremer et al., 2010; Treviño et al., 2006). Organizations must be aware of the consequences arising from the UB of their employees. According to De Cremer et al. (2010, p. 1) “ethical failures have become an important reality for corporations, organizations, and societies at large, and as a result there is a growing concern on how to manage and regulate such failures”.

Understanding UB is essential for the field of behavioral ethics, as it allows investigating the psychological and social factors that influence ethical or unethical decision-making by individuals. Behavioral ethics seeks to identify the cognitive processes and contextual influences that lead to moral transgressions, confident for the development of prevention strategies and promotion of EB. It can be defined as the study of “individual behavior that is subject to or judged according to generally accepted moral norms of behavior” (Treviño et al., 2006, p. 952). There are three different outcomes of research in the field of behavioral ethics. The first one is dedicated to UB, such as stealing or cheating (Chang, 1998); the second is to EB, which consists in meeting a certain baseline or criterion in regards to moral standards which exempts it from being considered unethical, like following workplace rules (Wimbush et al., 1997); the third goes over EB that surpass the aforementioned baseline or criterion regarding moral standards, such as whistleblowing (Treviño & Youngblood, 1990). Organizations and supervisors play a key role in fostering an ethical culture (Bazerman & Banaji, 2004). EB in an organizational context refers “to the study of ethical and unethical decision and behavior” (Treviño et al., 2014). People differ in their perceptions and evaluations of UB, therefore, organizations must guide their employees on EB in the workplace (Kuenzi et al., 2020).

Ethics can be defined as an “inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean judgments, standards, and rules of conduct” (Taylor, 1975, p. 1 cit. in Kaptein, 2008). UB consists in violating the ethical and moral principles established by a larger community which is not simply limited to workplace or organizational norms (Kaptein, 2008). In this sense, unethical decisions are “illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 367). UB can be defined as “behaviors that are inconsistent with the prevailing codes of conduct and ethics within a given business organization” (Lin et al.,

2018, p. 781). There are several studies that seek reasons for engaging in UB (Umphress et al., 2010), namely for the benefit of the person himself (Greenberg, 2002; Terpstra et al., 1993), to retaliate or harm the organization (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), harm co-workers (Thau et al., 2007), or to benefit the company (Umphress & Bingham, 2011). EB, on the other hand, consists in conforming to these sets of rules imposed by the community (Kaptein, 2008) and are “behaviors that are consistent with codes of ethics and acceptable conduct within a referent group” which request compliance to “moral norms” (Lin et al., 2018, p. 781). Several prior studies have concentrated on specific influential ethical and unethical acts, such as theft or corruption and whistleblowing (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Greenberg, 2002; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). In this sense, every business must prioritize ethics.

However, people can engage in a range of UB, whether they mean to or not (Ferrell et al., 2019). Theft, discrimination, harassment, and fraud are a few examples of unethical actions that can occur in the workplace, among many others (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). The actions may result in major repercussions including reputational harm, loss of confidence, litigations, and financial fines (Treviño et al., 2014). A code of ethics is an example of how an organization can promote an ethical culture by preventing UB (Kaptein, 2008).

Employees may replicate each other in unethical acts and foster an unethical organizational environment through social contagion mechanisms and role modeling (Mayer et al., 2009). There are two groups of unethical work behaviors that are particularly relevant to organizations, namely, counterproductive work behavior and proactive pro-organization behavior (Wen et al., 2020). Counterproductive behavior can be defined as an activity that is meant to harm the organization or members of the organization (Marcus & Schuler, 2004; Fox et al., 2001; Penny & Spector, 2005; Spector & Fox, 2002). Counterproductive behavior is not the only type of UB that is possible. While UB may cause damage it typically does not mean to do so (Kaptein, 2008). Therefore, counterproductive behavior is a particular type or subclass of UB that is meant to do harm and can harm performance. In turn, pro-organizational proactive behavior is considered ethical in that it goes above and beyond the minimum requirements of morality, such as honesty or abiding by the law, by providing more to the organization than is required and anticipated (Treviño et al., 2006). Proactive behavior involves “taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; It implicates challenging the status quo rather than passive adapting to present conditions” (Crant, 2000, p. 436). Pro-organizational proactive behavior may occasionally be unethical, however generally such actions by employees are moral ones that reflect their sense of duty (Wang et al. 2020). Proactive behavior

and counterproductive behavior are both optional and deliberate types of work conduct (Fay & Sonnentag, 2010; Spector & Fox, 2002).

Unethical conduct has increasingly captured attention, prompting concerns about its detrimental effects on different facets of the organizational environment. One particular concern is the potential damage they can cause to an organization's reputation (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). Therefore, organizations must have ethical systems that act as barriers to the intention to act unethically.

1.2. Ethical infrastructure (EI)

Considering its crucial function in fostering ethical and sustainable conduct in a variety of circumstances, the construct of ethics has grown significantly in relevance in today's society (Treviño & Nelson, 2017). The way someone acts and makes decisions are guided by a system of ethical standards or values known as ethics, which are impacted by a variety of social and personal aspects (Ferrell et al., 2019). The culture, conduct, and productivity of employees are significantly influenced by ethics in the setting of companies and work environments (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). Fostering EB among workers requires a comprehension of the ethical environment of the workplace (Kaptein, 2008).

Ethical context and EI are two interrelated but distinct concepts in the study of ethics. The ethical context refers to the moral values, principles, and norms that influence how people behave in the workplace. On the other hand, EI refers to the policies, procedures, and systems that an organization puts in place to promote EB and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements (Liu et al., 2016). An EI includes a code of ethics and other measures aimed at preventing UB (Kaptein, 2008). Establishing explicit norms and guidelines for EB may benefit corporations, while also giving employees the guidance and encouragement required to deal with ethical problems and dilemmas (Liu et al., 2016). Both ethical context and infrastructure are important to foster EB in the organization.

Tenbrunsel et al. (2003, p. 285) define EI as “organizational elements that contribute to an organization’s ethical effectiveness”. It is composed of formal and informal systems with mechanisms that help to implement ethical principles. The authors suggest three mechanisms that ensure the impact of the EI, specifically, “communication systems that convey ethical principles, surveillance systems that monitor adherence to these principles, and sanctioning systems that reward or punish ethical behavior” (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003, pp. 287-288). Such mechanisms can transmit ethical values formally or informally. Formal systems can be defined

as “those that are documented and standardized, visible to anyone inside or outside the organizations” (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003, p. 288). Furthermore, informal systems are “those indirect signals regarding appropriate ethical conduct that are received by the organizational members” (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003, p. 288). The primary goal of an EI is to shape how people behave in organizations when they are presented with ethical dilemmas (Simões et al., 2019).

The code of ethics is acknowledged as the foundational component of an ethics program and of an EI (Remišová et al., 2018). In 1989, corporate codes of ethics were a new concept (Brooks, 1989), and it aimed to be “useful to junior managers in letting them know exactly what they can do” (Benson, 1989, p. 308). In this sense, the code of ethics is defined as a “written, distinct, formal documentation of moral standards that help guide employees and corporate behavior” (Lin and colleagues, 2016, p. 781). A code of ethics is seen as a tool for preventing UB at work and enhancing the corporate environment, which offers a framework for assessing and managing behavior, an indicator of an organization’s dedicated to ethical standards, as guidelines created by an organization to direct the behavior of its employees, and assists employee’s decision-making and helps them handle ethical dilemmas (Lin et al., 2018). It can influence employees’ attitudes toward EB and are related to employees’ perspective on business ethics (Lin et al., 2018). A code of ethics that is successfully implemented can stop employees from acting opportunistically by triggering their adherence to social standards like reciprocity and fairness (Jannat et al., 2022). However, is not enough to be ethical or for employees to behave ethically (Remišová et al., 2018) since the code of ethics is effective when combined with additional organizational variables that adhere to the established formal norms (Simões et al., 2019).

An ethics program is purposefully created to reflect the organization's basic beliefs and is consistent with the official structures and practices of the organization and may be defined as “an integrated system of logically interconnected values and related norms as mandatory ethical standards, processes, and institutions which the organization accepts for a long-term and continuous development of ethics in and outside the organization” (Remišová et al., 2018, p. 153). An ethics program is “the way companies make explicit their guidelines for ethical behavior in terms of basic principles and values, strategies, and organization policies, as well as in terms of well-defined norms and rules” (Majluf & Navarrete, 2011, p. 568). Studies have demonstrated that an ethics program can reduce UB (Jannat et al., 2022) and promote EB (Kaptein, 2014). The scope of an ethics program “refers to the range of measures or instruments incorporated into an ethics program” which guarantees that the EI is effective (Kaptein, 2014, p. 419). The more components included in an ethical program the more effective will be to

diminish UB (Kaptein, 2014). Employees may refrain from engaging in behaviors that are detrimental to the organization if they perceive a more ethical workplace (Lee & Ha-Brookshire, 2020).

However, official behavioral guidelines and yearly ethics instruction may not have much of an effect on most daily choices (Leavitt et al., 2015) because people tend to be prone to give in to selfish acts, even though they are aware that it might be wrong and go against moral and ethical principles since there are individual characteristics that can determine UB (Simões, 2015), as we will explore in next section.

1.2.1. Individual characteristics that determine UB

The way people behave is multidetermined, resulting from contextual and individual determinants (Simões, 2015). People create moral norms that act as guides and deterrents for behavior as they build a moral self (Bandura, 2002). Identity is ingrained in one's essence and is related to its perception of reality, which implies behaving in line with their moral principles (Erikson, 1964).

Hart and colleagues (1998, p. 515), define moral identity (MI) as “a commitment to one's sense of self to lines of action that promote or protect the welfare of others”. MI is “one kind of self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral action” and the probability that an individual perceives that moral characteristics are crucial for his or her self-concept is the linking factor relating MI and moral behavior (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1423). MI is constituted by two dimensions, namely, internalization and symbolization: internalization refers to the “degree to which a set of moral traits is central to the self-concept” and symbolization is “the degree to which these traits are expressed publicly through the person's actions in the world” (Reed & Aquino, 2003, p. 1272). Even though MI is made up of a variety of personal characteristics, it may be influenced by social referents (Leavitt et al., 2015). Nawfel and Xiang (2021) concluded that MI has a significant impact on ethical decision-making when confronted with an ethical dilemma. An individual whose self-concept places less emphasis on MI may be less driven to act morally (Aquino et al., 2009). When linked to individual characteristics and environmental conditions, MI has an impact on how people behave ethically (Shao et al., 2008; Treviño et al., 2014).

The propensity for individuals to act unethically is influenced by both environmental characteristics such as the presence of an ethics code, and personal traits, for example, Machiavellianism (Lin et al., 2018). Regarding the impact of individual differences in EB, Machiavellianism is among the features that are most frequently discussed (Simões, 2015).

Machiavellianism can be defined as “the tendency to cynical, misanthropic, cold, pragmatic, and immoral beliefs; detached affect; pursuit of self-beneficial and agentic goals (*e.g.*, power, money); strategic long-term planning; and manipulation tactics” (Rauthmann, 2012, p. 487). Machiavellians are sensitive to injustices, solely focused on their own gains and predisposed to counterproductive work behaviors. Therefore, it is implausible that they put any significance on moral conduct if it interferes with the process of getting rewarded personally (Dahling et al. 2009). The context has a high capacity to influence or promote choices to behave in an unethical way. Thus, the impact of an unethical environment can worsen Machiavellian’s UB (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2019). On that note, both MI and Machiavellianism are variables to consider. Previous research has shown that an individuals who strongly identify with ethical values are less likely to engage in UB, even in the absence of a strong EI (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). O’Fallon and Butterfield (2005) found that those with higher levels of Machiavellianism exhibit less EB.

However, as previously mentioned, contextual determinants can have an impact on how individuals act (Simões, 2015). Thus, PA is a component of HRM that can also influence people’s behavior. In the next section, we will explore how performance appraisal can be related to ethical/unethical behaviors.

1.3. Performance appraisal (PA)

PA emerges as one of the most critical problems that must be solved and holds a major position in organizational psychology studies almost from the moment it was established as a field of study (Caetano, 1996). It encourages employees to adopt attitudes and actions that are congruent with the organization’s goals (Datta et al., 2005). PA is an essential and crucial HRM activity (Roberts, 2003). However, if it is made improperly, it may do more harm than good, so it must adhere to a series of instructions from the start so that employees would view the system as ethical (Misiak, 2010). PA is “one of the phenomena that most disturbs the regular functioning of any organization since the anxiety generated by the parties involved during the process weakens “the efficiency of the process and organizational functioning” (Caetano, 2008, p. 7).

PA can be defined as “the process by which an organization measures and evaluates an individual employee's behavior and/or accomplishments for a finite time period” (Banner & Cooke, 1984, p. 327). Accordingly, PA is “a systematic periodic and impartial rating of an employee’s excellence in matters about his present job and his potentialities for a better job

performance” (Sabiou et al., 2018, p. 51). In turn, Roberts (2003, p. 89) affirms that “performance appraisal is one of the most complex and controversial human resource techniques”.

The opportunity to provide performance feedback, decide on a foundation for promotions and salaries, and talk about employees' career goals is provided by appraisals for supervisors. PA can have a significant impact on work productivity (Caetano, 1996). If PA are negatively perceived they “can diminish rather than enhance employee attitudes and performance” (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011, p. 1694). Thus, when this process is perceived as unfair it can lead to UB. Employees are concerned about the effectiveness of PA since poor reviews result in unfavorable results (Waheed et al., 2018). Performance requirements must be made clear, and employees must get mentoring to solve performance issues for PA to be considered as procedurally fair (Helsin & VandeWalle, 2011).

Performance appraisal interview (PAI) is a “recurrent strategic interviews between a superior in an organization and an employee that focus on employee performance and development” (Asmub, 2008, p. 409). Involves a structured conversation between a supervisor or manager and an employee, aiming to evaluate the employee's performance, provide feedback, set goals, and discuss development opportunities (Caetano, 1996). It provides an opportunity for supervisors and employees to engage in open communication, discuss performance expectations, and align individual goals with organizational objectives (Cederblom, 1982). The effectiveness of the PAI depends on several factors, including clear communication, active listening, constructive feedback, goal-setting, and a supportive environment (Cederblom, 1982). When conducted properly, the interview can contribute to employee development, motivation, and performance improvement.

However, there is a vast literature that shows biases in the PA process, despite the objective performance of employees (DeNisi & Smith, 2014; Roberson et al., 2007). PA can be influenced by personal biases and subjectivity, leading to unfair evaluations. Biases can be based on factors such as personal relationships, stereotypes, or implicit biases, resulting in inaccurate assessments of employees' performance (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015). For example, the halo effect occurs when an employee's overall performance is influenced by a single positive attribute or exceptional performance in one area. Similarly, the horns effect occurs when a single negative trait or poor performance influences the overall appraisal. These effects can distort the overall assessment and hinder fair evaluations (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015). Also, appraisers who lack training or competency in conducting PA may struggle to provide fair and effective feedback. Inadequate training can lead to inconsistencies

in ratings and ineffective performance discussions (DeNisi & Smith, 2014). Another problem can be that employees may resist the appraisal process if they perceive it as unfair, unreliable, or unrelated to their actual job responsibilities. A lack of trust in the appraisal system can undermine its effectiveness and acceptance among employees (Levy & Williams, 2014).

When PAI is not well conducted, it can have several negative consequences for both the employee and the organization. If employees perceive the PA process as unfair due to inconsistent evaluation criteria, biased feedback, or lack of transparency, it can create a sense of injustice (Colquitt et al., 2013; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). This perception of unfairness can lead to feelings of resentment or frustration, which, in some cases, may push individuals towards engaging in UB as a form of retaliation or seeking personal gain (Greenberg, 1990). Without proper guidance and feedback, employees may struggle to identify areas for improvement or understand how to develop their skills and competencies. Lacks of open communication, empathy, and fairness, can erode trust and create a negative work environment (Meinecke & Kauffeld, 2019).

Since few employees are happy with their evaluation, PA are frequently a subject of complaints and condemnation. Consequently, negative feedback is frequently reported as being unpleasant to give by supervisors. Additionally, these human resources practice is “linked to important outcomes in organizations and disagreement between supervisors and subordinates” leading to “interpersonal conflict” (Holbrook, 2002, p. 102). The explanations that supervisors give about the employees’ behavior have an impact on performance appraisals (Dahling et al., 2009). Therefore, perceived justice (PJ) and perceived supervisor support (PSS) are variables that may explain the relationship between PA and UB.

1.4. Perceived justice (PJ)

Organizational justice concentrates on how a person is affected by the actions and attitudes of others (Tenbrunsel & Chugh, 2015). Also, it is a crucial component that affects how ethically compliant employees perform (Halbusi et al., 2019).

The organizational context must take PJ into account since it affects how employees feel about the organization and how they behave. PJ is a person's subjective assessment of the fairness or justice of organizational practices, procedures, and results (Colquitt, 2001). Distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice are the three categories into which conceptions of justice in an organizational environment may be divided (Greenberg, 1987). Distributive justice concerns the perception about the outcome of the distribution of

resources, being the perceived ratio between contributions and benefits in comparison with others (Correia, 2010). When results are in line with implied standards for distribution, such equity or equality, distributive justice is promoted (Colquitt, 2001). Procedural justice concerns the way procedures are carried out, highlighting how fair the processes are thought to be (Correia, 2010). This dimension of justice communicates information about how fair a person's employment is and is intimately related to the constructional elements of decision-making (Rosen et al., 2011). Whether someone acts morally or not may depend on their perspective on procedural justice (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003). Interactional justice concerns the quality of interaction based on communication and respect, implying an honest, fair, and respectful relationship (Correia, 2010). It refers to the interpersonal application of processes or the means through which the supervisor informs the subordinate of outcomes (Williams, 2016).

Organizations can promote perceptions of justice by implementing fair and transparent procedures and policies, providing employees with a voice in decision-making processes, and treating employees with dignity and respect (Colquitt et al., 2013). Organizational justice can increase employees' views and actions towards an ethical conduct, improving their performance at work (Walumbwa et al., 2009). However, if employees experience organizational unfairness, they will act out in a negative way (Chih et al., 2016; Mingzheng et al., 2014) engaging in UB, for example. Colquitt (2001, p. 387) explains that "reorganizing a performance evaluation system so it provides employees more process control can be termed a fair outcome, even though process control is a procedural construct". PJ lowers the level of hidden harmful conduct. Thus, the employees that perceive injustice are more likely to act discreetly to restore justice, whereas those who experience justice are more likely to respond by doing good deeds for others (Treviño & Weaver, 2001).

According to the appraisal theory, emotions emerge as a result of an appraisal of occurrences. If an event is deemed important to an individual's personal well-being and goal accomplishment, it will elicit emotional responses (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Therefore, employees are frequently emotionally affected by organizational justice (Weiss et al., 1999). The perception of procedural justice generates a sense that one can change one's surroundings, which leads to favorable sensations (Fox et al., 2001). Furthermore, interactional justice has a detrimental impact on employees' well-being, triggering unpleasant emotions (Chen & Spector, 1992). Fairness theory emphasized the relevance of the deontic response to perceive unfairness. Deontic response can be defined as "emotionally reactive, retributive, and sometimes irrational" which is explained by moral accountability. Hence, unfair actions are regarded as such if the person did something distinct, the result could perhaps be better. From the standpoint of moral

accountability, PA is an example of an occurrence that can elicit strong deontic responses (Jacobs et al., 2014, p. 66).

1.5. Perceived supervisor support (PSS)

The support that employees obtain is an important concept (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The valuation of employees and its supervisor, regarding distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, is affected by the employees' perception of justice (Moorman et al., 1998; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Some authors emphasize the importance of support in proactive and counterproductive behavior (Parker et al., 2006; Miles et al., 2002).

Ethical and unethical behavior can be developed through social influence and therefore EB as an example on the part of leaders is effective (Brown et al., 2005). According to the social exchange theory, people are more likely to reciprocate with good conduct when they feel that their supervisor is with them (Halbusi et al., 2020). Hence, an important aspect of EB inside an organization is ethical leadership (Mayer et al. 2009). Most employees will be inclined to place their trust in supervisors when they support and treat them justly, which is advantageous for the organization. Supervisors serve as ambassadors for their organization and their actions significantly influence employees' behaviors (Halbusi et al., 2019).

PSS includes employees' perceptions about their supervisor regarding their contributions and if the supervisor is concerned about their welfare (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Employees develop broad perceptions of how much their employer values their efforts and is concerned with their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Perceived support is related to distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Distributive justice conveys the organization's care for the wellbeing of the employee and hence influences how the employee feels supported. Employees may see any positive actions performed by the organization as an indication that the it values them, which encompasses the distinct dimensions of justice (Eisenberger et al., 1990).

Throughout social interactions, perceptions of justice affect significant employees' outcomes. If supervisors behave towards their employees fairly and honestly, they gain their respect and the power to affect their behaviors (Selvarajan et al., 2018). Supervisors “affect follower’s self-concept and identity by highlighting how follower efforts are linked to attaining important moral goals and values” (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012, p. 43). Because perceived support improves employees' care and commitment to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001), it may be associated with UB. Perception of unfair supervisor behavior facilitates

retaliatory actions aimed at those who have caused the unfair situation and by so restoring the perception of fairness (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Skarlicki et al., 1999). This retaliatory behavior is a sort of UB that seeks to deliberately damage the organization (Bidder et al., 2001).

Considering the literature presented, the general hypothesis of the present work is that the perception of performance appraisal (PPA) can lead to UB, particularly when the organization's EI is not strong. This will depend on how people perceive justice and the supervisor's support. To test and discuss these conjectures, we carried out an empirical study whose objectives, hypothesis, methodology, and results are presented in the next chapter.

Performance appraisal and unethical behavior: a quasi-experimental study

2.1. Objectives and hypotheses

The relationship between PA and the propensity of people to be ethical in an organization is not yet well studied, with very few exceptions (*e.g.*, Jacobs et al., 2014). In virtue of the dearth of research on PA and UB, this study aims to reinforce the literature in this sense. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to verify to what extent the way people perceive PA can interfere with their propensity to engage in UB and how EI affect in this sense.

Since Jacobs et al. (2014) indicated that the PPA seems to affect the propensity for UB and given that a strong EI favors the propensity to resist the UB (*e.g.*, Kaptein, 2011), we assume that the stronger the EI and the more the PPA is positive can act as a preventive of UB.

An individual's view of procedural justice may determine whether they act morally or not (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003). The sense of injustice encourages unethical actions intended to punish those who are seen as unjust and restore the perception of fairness (Bidder et al., 2001; Skarlicki et al., 1999). Like so, the way that PA is perceived tends to encourage organizational actors to reciprocate with beneficial behaviors, whereas perceived injustice tends to provoke sentiments of anger and frustration, contributing to subtle behavior targeted at correcting the justice system (Treviño & Weaver, 2001). Therefore, we expect that if employees perceive their PA as positive will be less predisposed to UB.

H1: The PPA is associated with UB so that the more the PPA the lower the propensity for UB.

Although PA has often been viewed as a tool for identifying low-performing employees (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Kavanagh & Johnson, 2018), it can promote fairness, accountability, and transparency in the workplace. This process ensures that employees are evaluated on the same standards regardless of their background or personal characteristics. By using objective criteria, PA minimizes the potential for bias or discrimination in the evaluation process, promoting fairness and equal opportunities for all employees. Moreover, PA also serves as a

means for identifying and addressing ethical issues within an organization. By monitoring employee behavior and performance, management can identify potential ethical breaches and take corrective action to address them (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2018).

An EI can guide how employees act when faced with ethical dilemmas (Simões et al., 2019). People tend to behave consistently if they are aware of what is expected of them in terms of morality and ethics (De Cremer & Moore, 2020). The perception regarding what is considered ethical that is advocated by the organization, as opposed to the individual judgment, takes precedence if a strong EI exists (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003). The individual seeks direction in the organization to know how to behave, and for that looks at how devoted the organization is to ethical standards. Although there is not a linear link between EI and EB (Simões et al., 2019), when an organization has a strong EI employees act more ethically than when faced with a weak EI (Tenbrunsel et al., 2003).

Hence, if employees perceive a more ethical workplace they could refrain from actions that are harmful to the organization (Lee & Ha-Brookshire, 2020). Previous studies have shown that individuals are more likely to engage in UB when they perceive a weak EI in their workplace (Gino & Pierce, 2009). Likewise, employees who work in organizations with a strong EI are more likely to identify with ethical values and behave ethically (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007).

H2: The stronger the EI and the more positive the PPA, the lower the propensity for UB.

In the second part of our study, we seek to understand the mechanisms of the relationship between the PPA and UB. For this, considering the literature review presented in the previous chapter, we focused on PJ and PSS. Since there are individual characteristics that determine the propensity to engage in UB, such as MI and Machiavellianism, we are controlling these variables.

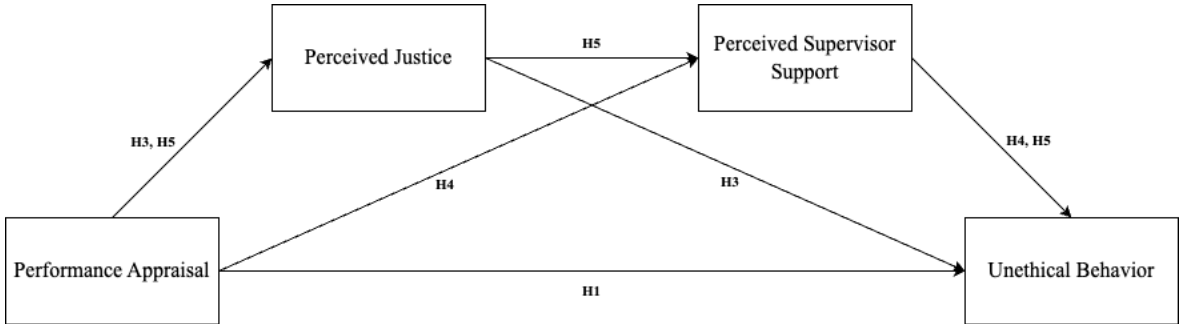


Figure 2.1 - Research model

The relationship between PA and UB in organizations is significantly influenced by the notion of justice (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013; Cropanzano et al., 2007). However, these relationships are not frequently studied by researchers (Jacobs et al., 2014). Previous research shows that individuals who believe their organization has a strong EI and who also believe they are treated with justice are less likely to act unethically (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008).

It is crucial for organizations to foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and fairness, both in their ethical standards and in their PA practices (Treviño et al., 2000). We believe that the PJ in PA is associated with UB. In this sense, when employees perceive their PA to be based on objective criteria and without bias, they are less likely to engage in UB.

H3: PJ mediates the relationship between PA and UB.

Employees' perceptions of justice have an impact on how the organization and its supervisor view them in terms of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Moorman et al., 1998; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Consequently, perceived support is associated with distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Distributive and procedural fairness are linked to PSS (Colquitt, 2001). Justice perceptions may indicate how much an organization values its employees (Moorman et al., 1998). Employees who feel supported by their direct supervisor are less inclined to act unethically since support from the supervisor works as the opponent of restrictions (Mayer et al., 2019). Employees are prone to engage in EB and minimize activity that might be averse to the supervisor in response to perceived supervisor support. Hence, we expect that PSS mediates the relationship between PA and UB.

H4: PSS mediates the relationship between PA and UB.

It has been suggested that the PPA may impact UB in employees (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2014; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). However, the mechanisms underlying this relationship remain unclear, so as previously mentioned two potential mediating variables are PJ and PSS.

PPA may influence PJ and PSS, which in turn may impact UB. This sequential mediation model has not been fully tested yet but could provide a better understanding of how these factors interact to impact EB in the workplace.

H5: The relationship between PA and UB is sequentially mediated by PJ and PSS.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Participants

In total 277 responses were counted. However, 105 participants were excluded since they were students. Likewise, 11 participants were excluded since they did not meet the inclusion criteria, that is, being linked to an organization for at least 6 months. Also, 25 participants were also excluded because the manipulation check did not correspond to the assigned scenario.

The sample consists of 136 participants, 101 female, and 35 male, with a mean age of 37 years old ($SD = 11.55$; ranging aged 21 to 62). Only one participant used the English version of the questionnaire.

Regarding academic qualifications, most participants (48.8%) have a degree, 25% have completed a master's degree, 19.9% have completed higher education and 1.5% have completed a doctorate. 82.4% of the sample is employed and 17.6% are student workers.

Most participants work for private entities (91.2%) and large organizations (48.5%), that is, organizations with more than 500 employees. The average number of years that the participants have been working in their respective organizations is 9 years ($M = 8.83$; $SD = 9.71$), with the minimum length of service registered being 6 months and the maximum 35 years.

2.2.2 Procedure

The sample was collected between the months of February and April of 2023.

The questionnaire was available in Portuguese (Annex 1) and English (Annex 2) and developed through the Qualtrics software. It could be accessed online, through a link shared in social networks (*e.g.*, LinkedIn), thus obtaining a convenience sample with snowball sampling.

All participants were informed that the data collected would be confidential and voluntary with consent information obtained.

The questionnaire is then composed firstly by informed consent, followed by the collection of sociodemographic data from the participants, presentation of the conditions for manipulating the independent variables, a measure of PJ, measure of PSS, measure of UB, measure of Machiavellianism and MI.

2.3. Variables and measures

2.3.1. Independent variables

To test the hypotheses a quasi-experimental study was conducted with a 2x2 factorial design: PPA (positive vs. negative) and EI (strong vs. weak). We manipulated EI with the existence or not of the code of ethics and the information and communication about the formal system. The PA was manipulated through the positive and negative valence of the process and the result. To manipulate the study's independent variables, four scenarios were constructed.

The scenarios presented to the participant one of the four conditions: the organization in question could have a strong(1) or weak(2) EI through the presence of a code of ethics and communication of the formal systems and the PA being positive(3) or negative(4) in terms of results and process in the moment of feedback. Each participant was exposed to only one of the four scenarios which were randomly presented. To ensure that the scenario and its manipulation were understood, we created two dichotomic questions for the manipulation check: “Does the organization have a code of ethics?” and “A.L. was evaluated positively or negatively?”. All participants responded in accordance with the manipulation.

2.3.2. Dependent variables

Unethical behaviors – this variable was operationalized using Kaptein's measure of UB (2008), which enumerates a list of 37 unethical behaviors in the workplace, distributed across five dimensions of UB. For this study, it only used the dimension of customers, considering that the scenarios focused on someone that works in the commercial department of an organization. We asked the participants to answer based on how often they think A.L. will tend to exhibit the following behaviors. The scale customers ($\alpha = .96$) is composed of 8 items (*e.g.*, “Submitting false or misleading invoices to customers.”), whose response scale ranges from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

2.3.3. Mediator variables

Perceived justice – this variable was operationalized by adapting items from the Colquitt scale (2001) to be in accordance with the scenario. We asked the participants to consider the conditions of A.L. This scale is subdivided into four categories and the choice of items was performed according to what was done in the study by Jacobs et al. (2014). This means that as suggested by the aforementioned authors, the category of perceived distributive justice was measured by four items (*e.g.*, “Does the outcome reflect the effort A.L. put into work?”),

perceived procedural justice was measured by three items (*e.g.*, “Has A.L. been able to express their views and feelings during the performance appraisal?”), and perceived interactional justice was measured by six items covering both informational and interpersonal aspects (*e.g.*, “Has the supervisor treated A.L. with dignity?”). This measure is composed of 13 items ($\alpha = .96$), whose response scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Perceived supervisor support – this variable was operationalized by adapting items (*e.g.*, “The supervisor strongly considers A.L. goals and values”) from the Eisenberger et al. scale (2002). We asked the participants to consider what they know about A.L.'s situation. This measure is composed of 8 items ($\alpha = .96$), whose response scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

2.3.4. Covariates

To prevent the existence of biases on the part of the participants due to individual characteristics that determine UB, we measured Machiavellianism and MI as control variables. These were the only measures in which the responses were about the participant and not the character in the scenario.

Machiavellianism – this variable was operationalized through The Short Dark Triad (SD3) (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) using the subscale Machiavellianism. This subscale is composed of 9 items (*e.g.*, “You should wait for the right time to get back at people”) ($\alpha = .80$), using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

Moral Identity – this variable was operationalized using the MI scale of Aquino and Reed (2002), in which participants were presented with nine traits associated with moral identity (“affectionate, helpful, sensitive, hardworking, fair, honest, friendly, kind and generous”) and, subsequently, asked to they indicated to what extent they agreed with a set of statements, using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measure consists of 10 items, with 5 items corresponding to the internalization subscale (*e.g.*, “I strongly desire to have these characteristics”) ($\alpha = .72$) and the other 5 items corresponding to the symbolization subscale (*e.g.*, “I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics”) ($\alpha = .85$).

2.4. Results

SPSS Statistics software, version 28, was used to analyze data.

Table 2.1 contains the results of the descriptive statistics, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), as well as the correlations of the variables under study (correlation indexes of Pearson) (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 - Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables under study

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender ⁽¹⁾	1.26	0.44													
2. Age	37.23	11.55	-.092												
3. Educational level	3.83	1.07	-.065	-.268**											
4. Professional situation ⁽²⁾	1.18	0.38	-.052	-.396**	.110										
5. Seniority	8.83	9.71	-.071	.816**	-.355**	-.315**									
6. Machiavellianism	2.63	0.68	.059	-.258**	.083	.104	-.282**	(.80)							
7. Internalization	4.86	0.53	-.125	.124	.021	.094	.050	-.017	(.72)						
8. Symbolization	4.00	1.26	-.145	.048	-.021	.061	.024	.171*	.423**	(.85)					
9. Ethical infrastructure	0.50	0.50	-.084	.011	.049	-.039	.052	-.024	-.115	-.084					
10. Performance appraisal	0.50	0.50	.151	-.020	-.049	.077	.018	-.138	-.091	.045	.000				
11. Perceived justice	3.46	1.82	.113	.004	-.039	.182*	.063	-.076	-.117	.123	.089	.771**	(.96)		
12. Perceived supervisor support	3.62	1.74	.143	-.077	-.071	.126	.022	-.093	-.045	.120	.014	.842**	.864**	(.96)	
13. Unethical behavior	1.70	0.90	.052	-.134	.048	-.107	-.096	.142	.020	.036	-.228**	-.308**	-.358**	-.410**	(.96)

Notes: Cronbach's α between parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; ⁽¹⁾Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male; ⁽²⁾Professional situation: 1 = Employed, 2 = Worker/student, 3 = Student, 4 = Unemployed

Pearson's coefficients reveal that the main variables of interest are significantly intercorrelated, with moderate correlation to high values (all $p < 0.05$). The exception concerns intra-individual variables related to ethics (MI and Machiavellianism) which do not show significant correlations with UB.

Regarding the dependent variable – UB has a significant negative relationship with all the variables present in the model: EI ($r = -.228, p < .01$), PA ($r = -.308, p < .01$), PJ ($r = -.358, p < .01$), and PSS ($r = -.410, p < .01$).

The mediating variable – PJ presents a significant and positive relationship with the professional situation ($r = .182, p < .05$), PA ($r = .771, p < .01$) and PSS ($r = .842, p < .01$). It presents a negative and significant relationship with UB ($r = -.228, p < .01$).

The second mediating variable – PSS presents a positive and significant relationship with PPA ($r = .842, p < .01$) and with PJ ($r = .864, p < .05$).

To test to hypothesis 1 and 2, concerning the effects of the EI and the PPA on the propensity for UB we performed a factorial ANOVA. The results showed a main effect of PA ($F(1, 132) = 14.971, p < .001, \eta^2 = .102$), showing that participants with a positive perception have a lower propensity for UB ($M = 1.43; SD = 0.10$) than those who perceive it negatively ($M = 1.98; SD = 0.10$), giving support to H1.

As expected, and in alignment with previous research (*e.g.*, Kaptein, 2011), the degree of strength of EI also impacts the propensity for UB ($F(1, 132) = 8.217, p = .005, \eta^2 = .059$), with participants who were informed of a strong EI being less likely to behave unethically ($M = 1.50; SD = 0.10$), than those who dealt with a weak EI ($M = 1.91; SD = 0.10$). However, there is no significant interaction effect of these two variables on UB (see Figure 2.2; ($F(1, 132) = 2.836, p = .095, ns$), which gives no support for H2. Thus, both the PPA and the strength degree of EI independently influence the propensity for UB.

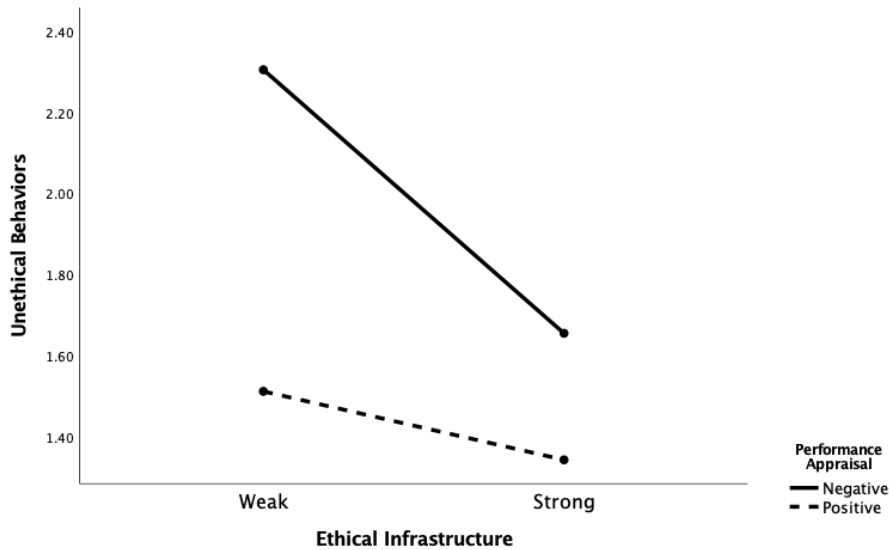


Figure 1.2 - Effects of PA and EI in UB

The remaining hypotheses (H3, H4 and H5) address the role of PJ and PSS in the psychological mechanisms underlying the effect of the PPA on propensity for UB. To do so, we perform three mediation analyses.

H3 stated that PJ mediates the link between PA and propensity for UB. The results indicate that PA significantly predict PJ ($\beta = 2.75$; $p < .001$), and the latter has a significant negative effect on UB ($\beta = -0.16$; $p = .01$). PJ indirect effect is significant ($\beta = -0.45$, 95% confidence interval [CI] = $-.94$; $-.06$). Therefore, H3 is supported.

H4 stated that PSS mediates the link between PA and propensity for UB. The results indicate that PA significantly predict PSS ($\beta = 2.90$; $p < .001$), and PSS has a negative and significant effect on UB ($\beta = -0.29$; $p < .001$). PSS indirect effect is significant ($\beta = -0.83$, 95% confidence interval [CI] = -1.31 ; $-.35$). Therefore, H4 is supported.

Finally, H5 posited that PJ and PSS are sequential mediators of the relationship between PA and UB. PA indirect effect on UB through PJ and PSS is significant ($\beta = -0.37$; 95% CI = $-.65$, $-.10$). The results confirm that PA is associated with PJ ($\beta = 2.75$; $p < 0.01$). PJ then fosters stronger PSS ($\beta = 0.51$; $p < 0.001$), which subsequently contributes to lower levels of UB ($\beta = -0.26$; $p < 0.01$). These findings support H5.

Furthermore, the direct effect of performance appraisal on UB in presence of the mediators was not found significant ($\beta = 0.31$, $p = .26$). However, a total effect was found significant ($\beta = -0.54$, 95% CI = $-.84$, $-.24$). These results indicate that the model is fully mediated.

Table 1.2 - Regression coefficients, standard errors, and model summary information for the serial multiple mediation model

		M_1 (PJ)			M_2 (PSS)			Y (UB)				
		Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>		
X (PA)	a_1	2.75	0.20	< .001	a_2	2.90	0.17	< .001	c''	0.30	0.27	n.s.
M_1 (PJ)		-	-	-	d_{21}	0.51	0.06	< .001	b_1	-0.16	0.06	.012
M_2 (PSS)		-	-	-		-	-	-	b_2	-0.26	0.08	< .001
Constant	i_{M1}	3.05	1.05	< .01	i_{M2}	1.70	0.86	.05	i_y	2.25	0.78	< .01
Machiavellianism		0.01	0.15	n.s.		0.02	0.12	n.s.		0.13	0.11	n.s.
Internalization		-0.36	0.21	n.s.		-0.01	0.17	n.s.		-0.05	0.15	n.s.
Symbolization		0.19	0.09	.030		0.11	0.08	n.s.		0.07	0.07	n.s.
		$R^2 = 0.78$				$R^2 = 0.85$				$R^2 = 0.44$		
		$F(4,131) = 51.51, p < .001$				$F(4,131) = 82.36, p < .001$				$F(6,129) = 5.13, p < .001$		

Notes: PA: Performance Appraisal; PJ: Perceived justice; PSS: Perceived supervisor support; UB: Unethical behavior. Controls: Machiavellianism, internalization, symbolization. M^1 : First mediator; M^2 : Second mediator. $M^1 = 3.05 + 2.75X$; $M^2 = 0.15 + 1.51M^1$; $Y^1 = (2.25) + 0.30X + (-0.03 M^1) + (-0.26M^2)$

Table 2.2 - Indirect effects

Indirect effects	Boot. SE	95% CI ^a	
Boot. lower level CI, Boot. upper level CI			
PA → PJ → UB = -0.45	0.22	(-0.94, -0.06)	H3 ✓
PA → PSS → UB = -0.83	0.24	(-1.31, -0.36)	H4 ✓
PA → PJ → PSS → UB = -0.37	0.14	(-0.63, -0.10)	H5 ✓
Total indirect effects: -0.84	-0.26	(-1.36, -0.34)	

Note: ^a5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals

2.6. Discussion

The main objective of this study was to understand in what way the PPA can interfere with people's intention to engage in UB. PA can foster a culture of accountability and transparency within an organization (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). This HRM practice monitors employee behavior (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2018). Therefore, it makes sense to identify potential ethical breaches and address ethical issues within an organization. For example, when supervisors provide constructive feedback and focus on the development of employees, it can enhance EB (Colquitt et al., 2013).

Results give support for H1 indicating that PPA is negatively related to UB. That is, the more the PA is perceived as positive, the less employees will engage in UB. These results are aligned with the evidences found by Jacobs et al. (2014), which indicate that when employees perceive fairness in their PA, they are less likely to engage in UB. This also seems to follow a generic tendency: when employees perceive justice in their organization, they are more likely to engage in EB and less likely to engage in UB (Treviño & Weaver, 2001). Overall, these findings highlight the importance of ethical considerations in designing and implementing PA systems.

Results give no support for H2. Both strong EI and positive PPA negatively impact UB, in separate and independent effects. Since no interaction effects were found, and considering the suggestion made by Jacobs et al. (2014, p. 73), that "understanding performance appraisals as part of an ethical infrastructure open up new opportunities", the independence of similar effects may suggest that PA can be seen as an element of the EI. However, since this an inference from a non-effect, this is a provisory conclusion that needs to be tested in future research, designed

to study the relative impact of different elements of EI, including PA, on several dependent indicators of organizational ethics. The idea that PPA might be associated with EI is not counterintuitive. Treviño and Weaver (2001) found that organizational justice is negatively related to harmful behavior and that ethics program moderates these relationships such that the effect of justice on behavior is stronger when employees perceive that their organization follows through on its ethics program. In addition, the relationship between justice and harmful behavior is stronger than the relationship between justice and helpful behavior (Treviño & Weaver, 2001). Thus, the employee's perception of HRM practices (*e.g.*, PA) can be essential when assessing ethicality in the workplace, and the role of PA in promoting or inhibiting EB may depend on the specific organizational context and the design of the PA system.

Regarding the specific mechanisms by which the PPA can deter the propensity for unethical acts, we found support for H3, since PJ mediates the relationship between PA and UB. Previous research has shown that PJ is a key factor in reducing UB (Treviño & Weaver, 2001). It means that the impact of the PA on UB is influenced by the extent to which employees perceive the process as fair and just. These results highlight the importance of PAI. The communication, active listening, constructive feedback and support during the PAI appear to be fundamental to promote EB and prevent UB (Cederblom, 1982). When employees perceive high levels of fairness in the appraisal process, the likelihood of engaging in UB is reduced. Conversely, when employees perceive low levels of fairness, the likelihood of engaging in UB increases. Organizational justice is also negatively correlated with counterproductive work behavior (Mingzhen et al., 2014). Perceived high levels of fairness in the PA process, creates a sense of trust, respect, and legitimacy, reducing the likelihood of engaging in UB (Ambrose et al., 2002). If employees perceive fairness in the appraisal process, they are more likely to engage in positive work behaviors, comply with organizational rules, and demonstrate higher levels of organizational citizenship (Colquitt et al., 2001).

We could confirm H4 since PA had a significant effect on UB mediated by PSS. Our findings indicate that PA has a positive effect on PSS and consequently this mediator was found to be negatively related with UB. This is consistent with previous research that has found that PSS is a key factor in influencing employee behavior (Eisenberger et al., 2002) and promoting EB in the workplace (Mayer et al., 2010). In addition, PSS is negatively related to deviant behavior and UB (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Eisenberger et al., 2002). It is also in line with the social exchange theory, which implies that employees who perceive that their organization and supervisors treat them fairly are more likely to reciprocate by engaging in positive behaviors and less likely to engage in negative behaviors (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Moreover, the positive relationship between PA and PSS is consistent with the social identity theory, which suggests that individuals identify with their organization and the people within it and are more likely to comply with the norms and values of their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, employees who receive positive feedback and support from their supervisors through the PA process are more likely to identify with their organization and exhibit positive behaviors. The results suggest that PA can be a tool for promoting EB by enhancing PSS. This highlights the importance of having a supportive supervisor who can serve as a role model and provide guidance and advice, which in turn can promote EB.

This study assessed the serial mediation with PJ and PSS. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of PA on UB through PJ and PSS. With this result we were able to confirm H5. These findings propose that people are more likely to see their supervisor as supporting when the PPA is positive and fair, which lowers their likelihood of acting unethically. Previous research has shown the importance of PJ and PSS in promoting ethical behavior among employees (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1990). When employees perceive that their supervisor supports them, they are more likely to comply with ethical standards, even when they face pressure to engage in UB. The serial mediation effect highlights the importance of a supportive work environment that reinforces EB. Furthermore, the direct effect of PA on UB in presence of the mediators was not found significant. This finding suggests that PJ and PSS fully mediate the relationship between PA and UB. The lack of a direct may be due to the fact that when employees perceive that the PA process is fair and that their supervisor is supportive, they are less likely to engage in UB, regardless of the evaluation results. In other words, the impact of a negative PA on UB is mitigated by the presence of these mediators.

2.7. Conclusions and practical implications

One of the main objectives of the study was to experimentally understand whether PA could be an important factor in the propensity to engage in UB. We could confirm this hypothesis. The PPA can influence ethical decision making (Goksoy & Alayoglu, 2013). Organizations can incorporate EB and values into the PA process. By aligning performance expectations with ethical standards, organizations send a clear message that ethical conduct is valued and rewarded. This can help reinforce EB and discourage UB among employees.

Also, we sought to explore if PA can be associated with EI taking into account the suggestion made by Jacobs et al. (2014). Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that PA can be a part of an EI since both variables have a negative and independent effect on

UB. These findings have significant implications for organizations, as they highlight the importance of both EI and PA in promoting ethical behavior (Zhu et al., 2004). Organizations should pay close attention to the EI in which PA is conducted and ensure that it is aligned with their values and ethical principles (Harris et al., 2007). In addition, organizations should ensure that their PA process is fair, transparent, and based on objective criteria (Colquitt et al., 2002). This can help to promote EB and reduce the incidence of UB in the workplace. To promote EB, organizations should implement effective PA systems that hold employees accountable for their actions. This can be achieved by providing training on how to conduct PA in an ethical manner and ensuring that employees receive regular feedback on their performance (Aguinis et al., 2012). Additionally, should be communicated the expectations for EB to employees and provide support for those who are struggling to meet those (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010).

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role of PJ in mediating the relationship between PA and UB. It is evident that when employees perceive high levels of fairness in the appraisal process, the likelihood of engaging in UB is significantly reduced. These results are consistent with previous research that has emphasized the importance of organizational justice in influencing employee behavior (Mingzhen et al., 2014). These findings provide practical implications that should be considered by organizations in order to foster an ethical work environment, such as encouraging open and transparent communication during the appraisal process and taking proactive measures to address any perceived injustices by promptly investigate and resolve employee complaints related to unfair evaluations or treatment. Also, continuously assessing the effectiveness of the PA process and make necessary improvements is necessary and this can be done by seeking feedback from employees to identifying areas of improvement and implement changes to enhance fairness and PJ (Gilliland, 1993).

We found that PSS mediates the relationship between PA and UB. This highlights the importance of supervisor behavior and support in shaping employee behavior (Miao et al., 2013). Organizations should ensure that supervisors are trained in providing support during the PA process, as this can have a significant impact on reducing UB in the workplace (Treviño & Brown, 2005). This could include providing training on how to give feedback effectively, how to address performance issues in a constructive manner, and how to support employees in setting goals for future performance (Brown et al., 2005; Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). Organizations should pay attention to the perceived support that supervisors provide to their subordinates in order to reduce UB.

We concluded that PA can have an impact on reducing UB, and this effect is mitigated by both PJ and PSS. From a practical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of

promoting EB in the workplace through effective PA systems. It also suggests that PSS and PJ play a key role in reducing UB. Organizations could focus on training supervisors to provide more support to their employees and creating fair and just policies to enhance perceptions of justice (Colquitt et al., 2007). The focus should be not only on establishing a code of ethics but also on creating a supportive work environment (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and consider the importance of social exchange theory and social identity theory in promoting EB among employees (Treviño & Brown, 2004). By enhancing PSS, organizations can create a sense of social identity among employees and encourage positive behaviors that align with the organization's values. By understanding these relationships, organizations can take steps to create a supportive work environment that reduces UB among employees. Prioritize EB can bring benefits to organizations from reduced incidents of UB, improved reputation, and increased employee satisfaction (Kaptein, 2008). Organizations should strive to create a culture of ethics and fairness in which employees are motivated to act in ethical ways, and PA can be used as a tool to support this goal.

In summary, this study contributes to the sparse empirical literature about PA and organizational ethics. Although some hypotheses were not supported, the results confirmed data from previous studies, which can be explored in the forthcoming, and highlighted the future importance that should be attributed to this topic, given the negative consequences that these behaviors can have for organizations if procedures are not seen as positive and fair and the organization itself does not have a strong EI.

2.8. Limitations

A limitation to point out is that using convenience sampling for data collection limits the generalizability of the results to different settings.

Another limitation of the study is that it relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias and social desirability effects. Also, this study was conducted through an online questionnaire, which may not fully capture the complexity of the relationship between the variables in study.

2.9. Future research

Future research should aim to replicate and expand upon the findings of this study, using a more diverse sample and a variety of organizations and industries. Additionally, longitudinal studies could help to shed light on the long-term impact of EI and PA on UB in the workplace.

Further research could consider using more diverse and rigorous research methods, such as field experiments or case studies. Therefore, future investigations could benefit from different research designs, such as experiments conducted in real work settings, to further explore these relationships. Qualitative research methods could be employed to gain a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences of employees in relation to PA and UB.

Additionally, it could be interesting to examine the relationship between PA and other aspects of EB, such as whistleblowing or ethical decision-making. Future research should explore other potential mediators (*e.g.*, organizational commitment, job satisfaction) of the relationship between EI, PA, and UB.

This study strongly supports the idea that the way people perceive PA can be seen as an important part of an EI. The independence of similar effects may suggest that PA can be seen as an element of the EI. Future research should explore these effects, studying the relative impact of different elements of EI, including PA, on several dependent indicators of organizational ethics. One example for this is designing an experimental study with a factorial design 2 (EI: strong vs. weak) x 2 (justice: fair vs. unfair).

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Annex

Annex A. Questionnaire - Portuguese Version

Parte I – Consentimento Informado

Caro(a) participante,

O presente questionário ocorre no âmbito de um projeto de investigação para o Mestrado em Psicologia Social e das Organizações do ISCTE-IUL. O objetivo é compreender alguns aspetos do comportamento das pessoas nas organizações.

Neste questionário não existem respostas certas ou erradas, e o seu contributo é único e valioso. A sua colaboração é fundamental, sendo que o preenchimento deste questionário demora, aproximadamente, 10 minutos. Algumas secções dizem respeito às suas perceções e opiniões, pelo que é fulcral que leia atentamente e responda com a maior sinceridade a **todas** as questões.

Esta recolha de dados está abrangida pela máxima confidencialidade e obrigada ao completo anonimato. Por isso, por favor, não se identifique em nenhuma parte deste questionário.

O tratamento dos dados recolhidos, bem como a sua eventual divulgação sob a forma de publicação científica, será realizado de forma agregada e nunca individualizada.

Para questões relacionadas com a participação, por favor, contacte aofls@iscte-iul.pt.

Obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Certifico que li e compreendi as instruções descritas e pretendo colaborar, respondendo ao questionário.

Parte II – Dados Sociodemográficos

Antes de iniciar, solicitamos-lhe alguma informação relativa aos seus dados pessoais. Recordamos-lhe que esta informação é estritamente confidencial e os seus dados permanecerão sob sigilo, sendo exclusivamente utilizados para os fins desta investigação.

1 – Sexo:

Feminino Masculino Outro

2 – Idade:

3 – Habilitações Literárias

Ensino Básico Ensino Secundário Bacharelato Licenciatura Mestrado Doutoramento

4 – Situação Profissional

Empregado(a) Trabalhador(a)/Estudante Estudante Desempregado(a) Outro

5 – A Organização para a qual trabalha é uma...

Entidade Pública Entidade Privada

6 – Antiguidade na Organização (caso trabalhe há menos de um ano utilize uma casa decimal, por exemplo, 6 meses = 0,5).

7 – Quantos colaboradores possui, aproximadamente, a sua Organização?

1-9 10-49 50-249 249-500 +500

Parte III – Apresentação das Condições

De seguida, pedimos-lhe que leia a seguinte descrição e que responda a um conjunto de perguntas.

Recordamos que **deve ler atentamente** todas as questões e responder com a maior sinceridade possível.

Por favor, leia a descrição seguinte:

(Condição: Infraestrutura Ética Forte / Avaliação de Desempenho Justa)

Esta empresa possui código de ética. A comunicação acerca das normas éticas e comportamentos adequados é clara e amplamente divulgada por todos os colaboradores.

Nesta empresa, a avaliação de desempenho é crucial para a progressão de carreira, aumentos salariais, etc.

A.L., uma pessoa que nela trabalha, na área comercial, não atingiu os objetivos de vendas definidos. A entrada imprevista de um forte concorrente no mercado criou muitas dificuldades.

Com base nestes factos, na avaliação anual do desempenho, a chefia direta avaliou A.L. positivamente, destacando que tinha em conta a alteração ocorrida no mercado.

Na entrevista de avaliação do desempenho, a chefia pediu a A.L. que expressasse a sua opinião sobre o seu próprio desempenho e escutou ativamente quando fez referência à alteração ocorrida no mercado.

(Condição: Infraestrutura Ética Forte / Avaliação de Desempenho Injusta)

Esta empresa possui código de ética. A comunicação acerca das normas éticas e comportamentos adequados é clara e amplamente divulgada por todos os colaboradores.

Nesta empresa, a avaliação de desempenho é crucial para a progressão de carreira, aumentos salariais, etc.

A.L., uma pessoa que nela trabalha, na área comercial, não atingiu os objetivos de vendas definidos. A entrada imprevista de um forte concorrente no mercado criou muitas dificuldades.

Com base nestes factos, na avaliação anual do desempenho, a chefia direta avaliou A.L. negativamente, desvalorizando a alteração ocorrida no mercado.

Na entrevista de avaliação do desempenho, a chefia não permitiu que A.L. expressasse a sua opinião sobre o seu próprio desempenho e não escutou ativamente quando fez referência à alteração ocorrida no mercado.

(Condição: Infraestrutura Ética Fraca / Avaliação de Desempenho Justa)

Esta empresa não possui código de ética. A comunicação acerca das normas éticas e comportamentos adequados não é clara ou é desconhecida por todos os colaboradores.

Nesta empresa, a avaliação de desempenho é crucial para a progressão de carreira, aumentos salariais, etc.

A.L., uma pessoa que nela trabalha, na área comercial, não atingiu os objetivos de vendas definidos. A entrada imprevista de um forte concorrente no mercado criou muitas dificuldades.

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(Condição: Infraestrutura Ética Fraca / Avaliação de Desempenho Injusta)

Esta empresa não possui código de ética. A comunicação acerca das normas éticas e comportamentos adequados não é clara ou é desconhecida por todos os colaboradores.

Nesta empresa, a avaliação de desempenho é crucial para a progressão de carreira, aumentos salariais, etc.

A.L., uma pessoa que nela trabalha, na área comercial, não atingiu os objetivos de vendas definidos. A entrada imprevista de um forte concorrente no mercado criou muitas dificuldades.

Com base nestes factos, na avaliação anual do desempenho, a chefia direta avaliou A.L. negativamente, desvalorizando a alteração ocorrida no mercado.

Na entrevista de avaliação do desempenho, a chefia não permitiu que A.L. expressasse a sua opinião sobre o seu próprio desempenho e não escutou ativamente quando fez referência à alteração ocorrida no mercado.

Para verificar que a descrição ficou clara para si, por favor, responda às seguintes perguntas:

A empresa possui código de ética:

Sim

Não

A.L. teve uma avaliação:

Positiva

Negativa

Parte IV – Medidas

Pedimos-lhe agora que pense no caso que acabou de ler.

Por favor, responda às questões que se seguem **tendo sempre em conta a situação descrita.**

1 – Comportamentos Antiéticos

Tendo em conta a situação descrita, com que frequência acha que A.L. terá tendência a exibir os seguintes comportamentos? Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta a seguir, sendo 1 nunca e 5 sempre.

Envolver-se em ações de venda e de marketing falsas e enganosas (ex.: criar expectativas irrealistas).	1	2	3	4	5
Enviar faturas falsas ou enganosas aos clientes.	1	2	3	4	5
Envolver-se em práticas anti concorrenciais (ex.: fraude, subornos e outros presentes impróprios, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
Recolher informação confidencial da concorrência de forma inadequada.	1	2	3	4	5
Fabricar ou manipular testes de segurança e de qualidade de produtos.	1	2	3	4	5
Violar a privacidade de clientes ou consumidores.	1	2	3	4	5
Fechar um contrato com um cliente sem os devidos termos, condições e aprovações.	1	2	3	4	5
Violar os termos de contrato com clientes.	1	2	3	4	5

2 – Justiça Percebida

Por favor, indique o quanto concorda ou discorda com as afirmações seguintes, tendo em conta as condições de A.L.

Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta a seguir, sendo 1 discordo totalmente a 7 concordo totalmente.

A.L. pôde expressar as suas opiniões e sentimentos durante a avaliação de desempenho?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A.L. teve influência sobre os resultados atingidos na avaliação de desempenho?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A avaliação de desempenho foi baseada em informações precisas?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Os resultados de A.L. refletem o esforço investido no trabalho?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Os resultados de A.L. traduzem o trabalho desenvolvido?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Os resultados refletem o contributo de A.L. para a organização?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Os resultados de A.L. estão de acordo com o seu desempenho?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia tratou A.L. com dignidade?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia tratou A.L. com respeito?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia absteve-se de comentários impróprios a A.L.?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia explicou a avaliação de desempenho de forma detalhada?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
As explicações sobre a avaliação de desempenho foram razoáveis?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia adaptou a sua comunicação às necessidades de A.L.?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3 – Perceived Supervisor Support

Por favor, centre-se no caso descrito no início. Indique em que medida concorda com as afirmações seguintes, tendo em conta o que conhece da situação de A.L.

Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta a seguir, sendo 1 discordo totalmente e 7 concordo totalmente.

A chefia tem muita consideração pelos objetivos e valores de A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia disponibiliza ajuda quando A.L. tem um problema.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

A chefia preocupa-se realmente com o bem-estar de A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia perdoaria um erro honesto de A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia está disponível para ajudar quando A.L. precisa de um favor especial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Se existisse oportunidade, a chefia aproveitar-se-ia de A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia demonstra muito pouca preocupação com A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A chefia preocupa-se com as opiniões de A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4 – Maquiavelismo

Pedimos-lhe agora que **pense em si próprio(a)**, nos seus sentimentos, comportamentos e opiniões.

Por favor, indique em que medida concorda com cada uma das afirmações seguintes.

Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta sendo 1 discordo totalmente e 5 concordo totalmente

Não é sensato contar os nossos segredos.	1	2	3	4	5
Gosto de usar a manipulação inteligente para obter o que quero.	1	2	3	4	5
É preciso ter as pessoas importantes do nosso lado, seja lá como for.	1	2	3	4	5
Deve evitar-se o conflito direto com os outros porque eles podem ser-nos úteis no futuro.	1	2	3	4	5
É sensato mantermo-nos a par da informação que poderemos usar contra outras pessoas mais tarde.	1	2	3	4	5
Devemos esperar pelo momento certo para nos vingarmos das pessoas.	1	2	3	4	5
Para preservar a nossa reputação, há coisas que devemos esconder das outras pessoas.	1	2	3	4	5
Devemo-nos certificar de que os nossos planos trazem benefícios a nós, não aos outros.	1	2	3	4	5

A maioria das pessoas pode ser manipulada.	1	2	3	4	5
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5 – Identidade Moral

Para terminar, pedimos-lhe que responda às questões seguintes.

Encontra a seguir, nove adjetivos que caracterizam **um indivíduo**.

Carinhoso(a)

Prestável

Sensível

Trabalhador(a)

Justo(a)

Honesto(a)

Amigável

Amável

Generoso(a)

1. Tente visualizar essa pessoa
2. Imagine como ela pensa, sente e age
3. Agora, indique em que medida concorda com cada uma das afirmações apresentadas a seguir.

Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta, sendo 1 discordo totalmente e 7 concordo totalmente.

Sentir-me-ia bem se fosse uma pessoa com estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tenho estas características e isso é importante para mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Eu teria vergonha de ser uma pessoa com estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ter estas características não é verdadeiramente importante para mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Eu desejo fortemente ter estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Geralmente uso roupas que me identificam como tendo estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O que faço nos meus tempos livres identifica-me claramente como tendo estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

O tipo de livros e revistas que leio identificam-me como tendo estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O facto de ter estas características é comunicado aos outros através da minha afiliação a certas organizações.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Encontro-me ativamente envolvido/a em atividades que comunicam aos outros que tenho estas características.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Agradecemos a sua participação neste inquérito e o tempo despendido.

A sua resposta foi registada.

Annex B. Questionnaire - English Version

Part I - Informed Consent

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is part of a research project for the master's in social and organizational Psychology at ISCTE-IUL. The aim is to understand some aspects of people's behavior in organizations.

There are no right or wrong answers to this questionnaire, and your contribution is unique and valuable. Your collaboration is essential; filling out this questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes. Some sections concern your perceptions and opinions, so it is crucial that you read carefully and answer all questions as honestly as possible.

This data collection is covered by maximum confidentiality and is obligated to complete anonymity. Therefore, please do not identify yourself in any part of this questionnaire.

The processing of the collected data, as well as its possible dissemination in the form of a scientific publication, will be carried out in an aggregated manner and never individually.

For questions related to participation, please contact aofls@iscte-iul.pt.

Thank you for your collaboration!

I certify that I have read and understood the instructions described and intend to collaborate by answering the questionnaire.

Part II – Social demographic data

Before starting, we ask you for some information regarding your personal data. We remind you that this information is strictly confidential, and your data will remain confidential, being used exclusively for the purposes of this investigation.

1 – Gender:

Female Male Other

2 – Age

3 – Education Level:

Middle School Secondary School Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctorate

4 - Professional Status:

Employed Worker/Student Student Unemployed Other

5 – The Organization you work for is a...

Public Entity Private Entity

6 – Seniority in the Organization (if you have been working for less than a year, use a decimal point, for example, 6 months = 0,5).

7 – Approximately how many employees does your organization have?

1-9 10-49 50-249 249-500 +500

Part III - Presentation of Conditions

Next, we ask you to read the following description and answer a set of questions. We remind you that **you must carefully read** all the questions and answer as honestly as possible.

Please read the following description:

(Condition: Strong Ethical Infrastructure / Fair Performance Appraisal)

This company has a code of ethics. Communication about ethical standards and appropriate behavior is clear and widely disseminated by all employees.

In this company, performance appraisal is crucial for career progression, salary increases, etc.

A.L., a person who works there, in the commercial department, has not achieved the set sales targets. The unforeseen entry of a strong competitor in the market created many difficulties.

Based on these facts, in the annual performance appraisal, the direct superior evaluated A.L. positively, noting that it took into account the change in the market.

In the performance appraisal interview, the supervisor asked A.L. to express their opinion on their own performance and listened actively when A.L. referred to the change in the market.

(Condition: Strong Ethical Infrastructure / Unfair Performance Appraisal)

This company has a code of ethics. Communication about ethical standards and appropriate behavior is clear and widely disseminated by all employees.

In this company, performance appraisal is crucial for career progression, salary increases, etc.

A.L., a person who works there, in the commercial department, has not achieved the set sales targets. The unforeseen entry of a strong competitor in the market created many difficulties.

Based on these facts, in the annual performance appraisal, the direct superior evaluated A.L. negatively, devaluing the change in the market.

In the performance appraisal interview, the supervisor did not allow A.L. to express their opinion on their own performance and did not listen actively when A.L. referred to the change in the market.

(Condition: Weak Ethical Infrastructure / Fair Performance Appraisal)

This company has no code of ethics. Communication about ethical standards and appropriate behavior is not clear or unknown to all employees.

In this company, performance appraisal is crucial for career progression, salary increases, etc.

A.L., a person who works there, in the commercial department, has not achieved the set sales targets. The unforeseen entry of a strong competitor in the market created many difficulties.

Based on these facts, in the annual performance appraisal, the direct superior evaluated A.L. positively, noting that it took into account the change in the market.

In the performance appraisal interview, the supervisor asked A.L. to express their opinion on their own performance and listened actively when A.L. referred to the change in the market.

(Condition: Weak Ethical Infrastructure / Unfair Performance Appraisal)

This company has no code of ethics. Communication about ethical standards and appropriate behavior is not clear or unknown to all employees.

In this company, performance appraisal is crucial for career progression, salary increases, etc.

A.L., a person who works there, in the commercial department, has not achieved the set sales targets. The unforeseen entry of a strong competitor in the market created many difficulties.

Based on these facts, in the annual performance appraisal, the direct superior evaluated A.L. negatively, devaluing the change in the market.

In the performance appraisal interview, the supervisor did not allow A.L. to express their opinion on their own performance and did not listen actively when A.L. referred to the change in the market.

To verify that the description is clear to you, please answer the following questions:

The company has a code of ethics:

Yes

No

A.L. was evaluated:

Positively

Negatively

Part IV - Measurements

We ask you now to think about the case you just read.

Please, answer the following questions **always taking into account the situation described.**

1 – Unethical Behaviors

Given the situation described, how often do you think A.L. will tend to exhibit the following behaviors?

Please use the following response scale, from 1 never to 5 always.

Engaging in false or deceptive sales and marketing practices (e.g., creating unrealistic expectations).	1	2	3	4	5
Submitting false or misleading invoices to customers.	1	2	3	4	5
Engaging in anticompetitive practices (e.g., market rigging, quid pro quo deals, offering bribes or other improper gifts, favors, and entertainment to influence customers).	1	2	3	4	5
Improperly gathering competitors' confidential information.	1	2	3	4	5
Fabricating or manipulating product quality or safety test results.	1	2	3	4	5
Breaching customer or consumer privacy.	1	2	3	4	5
Entering into customer contracts relationships without the proper terms, conditions, or approvals.	1	2	3	4	5
Violating contract terms with customers.	1	2	3	4	5

2 – Perceived Justice

Please indicate how much you agree with the following requirements, taking into account the conditions of A.L.

Please use the following response scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree.

Has A.L. been able to express their views and feelings during the performance appraisal?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has A.L. had influence over the outcome arrived at by performance appraisal?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has performance appraisal been based on accurate information?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does the outcome reflect the effort A.L. put into work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is the outcome appropriated for the work A.L. completed?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does the outcome reflect what A.L. have contributed to the organization?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is the outcome justified, given A.L. performance?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has the supervisor treated A.L. with dignity?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has the supervisor treated A.L. with respect?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has the supervisor refrained from improper remarks or comments?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has the supervisor explained the performance appraisal thoroughly?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Were the supervisor explanations regarding the performance appraisal reasonable?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has the supervisor seemed to tailor its communication to A.L. specific needs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3 – Perceived Supervisor Support

Please focus on the case described at the beginning.

Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements, taking into account what you know about A.L.'s situation.

Please use the following response scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree.

The supervisor strongly considers A.L. goals and values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Help is available from the supervisor when A.L. has a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The supervisor really cares about A.L. well-being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The supervisor would forgive an honest mistake on A.L. part.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The supervisor is willing to help when A.L. needs a special favor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If given the opportunity, the supervisor would take advantage of A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The supervisor shows very little concern for A.L.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The supervisor cares about A.L. opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4 – Machiavellianism

We ask you now to **think about yourself**, in your feelings, behaviors and opinions.

Indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements.

Please use the following response scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

It's not wise to tell your secrets.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to use clever manipulation to get my way.	1	2	3	4	5
Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side.	1	2	3	4	5
Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later.	1	2	3	4	5
You should wait for the right time to get back at people.	1	2	3	4	5
There are things you should hide from other people to preserve your reputation.	1	2	3	4	5
Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others.	1	2	3	4	5
Most people can be manipulated.	1	2	3	4	5

5 – Moral Identity

Finally, we ask you to answer the following questions.

Find below nine adjectives that characterize **an individual**.

Caring	Helpful
Compassionate	Hardworking
Fair	Honest
Friendly	Kind
Generous	

1. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics.
2. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act.
3. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer the following questions.

Please use the following response scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree.

It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Having these characteristics is not really important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I strongly desire to have these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

We appreciate your participation in this survey and the time spent.

Your answer has been recorded.