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# **Conforming to career compromise: How a personal orientation can mitigate damages to organizational citizenship behavior**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose**—This investigation aims to unpack the negative connection between employees' experience of resource-draining career compromise and their organizational citizenship behavior, by theorizing a mediating role of their depersonalization of organizational leaders and a moderating role of their conformity orientation in this connection.

**Design/methodology/approach**—The hypotheses were tested with survey data collected among employees who operate in the construction retail industry in Portugal.

**Findings**—A critical reason that frustrations about unwanted career adjustments translate into a reluctance to undertake work efforts that exceed formal job descriptions is that employees develop dehumanized perceptions of the people in charge of the company. This explanatory mechanism is less prominent, however, to the extent that employees' personal orientation favors rule adherence.

**Originality/value**—This study adds to HR management research by showing how a mismatch between employees' current career situation and their own meaningful career goals paradoxically might direct them away from extra-role work behavior that otherwise could provide meaningfulness. This harmful dynamic, which can be explained by their propensity to treat organizational leaders as impersonal objects, can be avoided to the extent that employees draw from their conformity orientation.

**Practical implications**—For HR managers, this research identifies a key channel, indifference to organizational leaders, through which disappointments about compromised career developments escalate into rejection of voluntary work activities, which otherwise might leave a positive impression on leaders and enhance employees' careers. It also reveals that organizations can subdue this detrimental process by leveraging a sense of conformity among their workers.

**Keywords**—career compromise; depersonalization of organizational leaders; organizational citizenship behavior; conformity orientation; conservation of resources theory

**Paper type**—Research paper

## Introduction

When employees confront upsetting, resource-depleting career conditions, it undermines their positive work energy, leaving them less likely to contribute to the success of their employer (Hofer *et al.*, 2021; Kao *et al.*, 2022; Srivastava *et al.*, 2023). For example, employees' perceptions of career compromise, defined as “frustrations about unwanted career adjustments” (De Clercq, 2022, p. 622), represent a significant source of adversity that can prompt employees' convictions of a mismatch between their current career situation and their personal career goals (Creed and Gagliardi, 2015). Such disappointments manifest in various, related ways, such as when employees sense a discrepancy between their own career ambitions and what is feasible in the organization, develop the belief that their occupation is less challenging than expected, or perceive that their career path makes less of a difference than what they hope to achieve (Creed and Gagliardi, 2015). The career-related compromises associated with such perceptions are deeply frustrating in nature, with lasting, adverse impacts on how employees imagine their future in the company. Such considerations highlight the continued needs to comprehend how employees respond to the frustrations and to develop tactics that can mitigate or subdue their negative responses (De Clercq, 2022; Ryu and Jeong, 2021).

Different factors may lead employees to perceive a mismatch between their current career conditions and professional goals, including insufficient feedback from others (Creed *et al.*, 2015) or their own lack of proactivity (Creed *et al.*, 2017). Perceived career compromises, in turn, can lead to detrimental outcomes, such as enhanced career distress (Creed and Hughes, 2013) and plans to leave the company (De Clercq, 2022), or diminished career commitment (Ryu and Jeong, 2021), professional well-being (Creed and Blume, 2012), and work satisfaction (Tsaousides and Jome, 2008). We propose that it also might prompt a refusal to undertake

organizational citizenship behavior—that is, discretionary behavior that exceeds formal job descriptions and is not explicitly rewarded (Jnaneswar and Ranjit, 2022; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2018). The focus on this behavior is informed by the insight that voluntary work efforts may not only add to organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2018) but also enhance employees’ sense of the meaningfulness of their work (Lin *et al.*, 2020). In particular, we lack a clear understanding of how employees, who sense that their career is less meaningful than what they had hoped for, might *minimize* discretionary work behaviors that otherwise could enhance such meaningfulness, somewhat counterintuitively. The specific research objectives of this study then are to detail (1) *why* employees’ perceptions of having to make career compromises translate into a reluctance to dedicate personal energy to extra-role work activities and (2) *when* this translation is more likely, depending on employees’ personal orientations.

These research objectives set the stage for several contributions to HR management research. First, we detail how employees’ depersonalization of organizational leaders may serve as a channel through which their negative career beliefs translate into tarnished organizational citizenship behavior. In particular, we pinpoint a hitherto ignored behavioral outcome of perceived career compromise and overlooked determinant of organizational citizenship behavior, by investigating a critical factor that *connects* these two relevant phenomena, that is, the extent to which employees treat the people in charge of their organization as impersonal objects (Lee *et al.*, 2018). Identifying this explanatory mechanism is relevant from a conceptual angle, because the development of high-quality relationships with organizational leaders could help employees address the causes of their career-related frustrations, by convincing these leaders to alter the situation (Fatima *et al.*, 2023). But our research offers the relevant insight, and warning, that frustrations about compromised career developments could render employees reluctant to

allocate individual time to voluntary work efforts and thus unable to impress organizational leaders. This dynamic is critically informed by their indifference to leaders (Lee *et al.*, 2018). We thus pinpoint a potentially harmful sequence, in which employees who feel disturbed by career compromises exacerbate the adversity, because they release their irritation by displaying complacency toward their employer and the people who lead it, which likely makes these leaders less responsive to their career complaints (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2009; Yang *et al.*, 2020).

Second, we propose that employees' conformity orientation—"a personal attribute characterized by the tendency to act in accordance with prevailing social standards and practices" (Massei *et al.*, 2022, p. 1110)—is an important boundary factor that *buffers* this detrimental process. With this prediction, we respond to calls to investigate the contingent effects of resource-depleting career adversity (Hu *et al.*, 2022). As highlighted in extant research, employees can experience career-related frustrations as less upsetting if they actively seek career guidance (Creed and Hughes, 2013) or do not have to deal with unfair interpersonal relationships with supervisors (De Clercq *et al.*, 2020b), for example. We complement such studies by explicating how employees' personal orientation toward conformity may mitigate the escalation of perceived career compromise into diminished organizational citizenship behavior, through the depersonalization of organizational leaders. In so doing, we also add to discussions about how a conformity orientation can be detrimental in organizations, by prompting groupthink (Tarmo and Issa, 2022) and conflict avoidance preferences (Kamil Kozan and Ergin, 1999), but also beneficial, by enhancing employees' idea implementation efforts (Massei *et al.*, 2022), ethical competence (Pohling *et al.*, 2016), and job satisfaction (Yahyagil, 2015). In line with this second view, we showcase another functional role: A conformity orientation may alleviate the risk that

perceptions of career compromise generate counterproductive responses, such as depersonalization and subsequent work-related complacency.

### **Theoretical framework and research hypotheses**

The conceptual arguments for the mediating role of depersonalization of organizational leaders and the moderating role of conformity orientation in the perceived career compromise—organizational citizenship behavior link come from conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; see also Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). Employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors reflect their desire to safeguard their current resource bases in resource-depleting professional situations (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), which in turn informs two critical tenets of COR theory. The first tenet is that the resource depletion that stems from upsetting organizational treatments steers employees toward responses that offer them the opportunity to *cope* by unleashing their frustrations with the threats (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000; Pandey *et al.*, 2021). For example, Lin and Chen (2021) apply COR theory to argue that employees' sense that they have reached a career plateau leads them to develop beliefs about diminished external employability and decrease their career commitment, to express dismay with career hardships. The second tenet indicates that employees' reliance on relevant personal resources can diminish their desire to formulate such frustrated reactions, such that personal resources reduce the *need* to respond in self-protective ways (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000; Yuan *et al.*, 2024). For example, employees who become upset with resource-draining task conflict are less likely to respond with beliefs that their coworkers are responsible for the associated emotional hardships, to the extent that they can draw from their collectivistic orientation (De Clercq and Pereira, 2022b).

In COR theory, the concept of “resources” is broadly defined to include “objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are

valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources” (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 339). Among these diverse resources, employees are particularly eager to protect their self-esteem or sense of self-worth in relation to their work, according to both Hobfoll’s (2001) original arguments and subsequent applications of COR theory (Bedi, 2021; Li *et al.*, 2021). For example, extant research indicates how employees’ experiences of career-related adversity can generate self-damaging thoughts about the quality of their professional functioning (Yang *et al.*, 2019). De Clercq (2022, p. 663) similarly leverages COR theory to explicate how employees’ perception of having to make career compromises “prompts self-deprecation and disappointment about the treatment received from their employer.”

In line with the first COR tenet, we postulate that employees’ depersonalization of organizational leaders and subsequent reluctance to undertake voluntary work efforts constitute (seemingly) reasonable responses to perceptions of career compromise. Such responses allow employees to release their disappointment and avoid a further depletion of their self-esteem resources (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Notably, we do not measure employees’ sense of self-worth explicitly in this study, but we theorize that its depletion, due to frustration with unwanted career adjustments, prompts employees to treat organizational leaders as impersonal entities and then halt their own organizational citizenship behavior. Through these responses, they can express their dismay and cope, such that they feel less bad about the perceived discrepancy between their current career situation and their meaningful career goals (Creed and Gagliardi, 2015).

Consistent with the second COR tenet, we also anticipate that the *forcefulness* of these coping reactions is contingent on the extent to which employees can apply valuable personal resources to mitigate the development of self-damaging thoughts in the presence of work-related adversity (Abbas *et al.*, 2014; Abualigah *et al.*, 2024). In particular, when employees can draw

from their conformity orientation, or personal preference to comply with existing rules (Massei *et al.*, 2022; Miron *et al.*, 2004), it likely diminishes two effects: (1) the likelihood that they seek to cope with career-related hardships by developing dehumanized sentiments about the people in charge and (2) the risk that these sentiments, if they prevail, escalate into work-related sluggishness in the form of tarnished organizational citizenship behavior. Previous research has leveraged COR theory to identify a similar *dual* moderating role of mindfulness (another personal resource) in mitigating the translation of employees' forced undertaking of illegitimate work tasks into reduced voice behavior through a sense of diminished self-control (Yuan *et al.*, 2024).

In the proposed conceptual model, summarized in Figure 1, employees who are convinced that their career situation is marked by compromises are more likely to develop dehumanized perceptions of organizational leaders. These perceptions, in turn, curtail their willingness to extend themselves with behaviors that exceed their explicit work duties. Their depersonalization of the people in charge is a critical conduit through which their career frustrations escalate into lower work-related voluntarism. Their conformity orientation operates as a protective shield though; the escalation of perceived career compromise into decreased organizational citizenship behavior is less prominent among employees who embrace rule adherence.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

#### *Mediating role of depersonalization of organizational leaders*

We predict a positive relationship between employees' experience of career compromise and their depersonalization of organizational leaders. As noted, COR theory underscores self-esteem as a critical resource that employees adamantly seek to protect (Hobfoll, 2001; Wang *et*



*al.*, 2020). Rather than capturing the connection between perceived career compromise and drained self-esteem resources directly, we account for it indirectly. That is, we theorize about the repercussions of resource drainage for how employees' career-related frustrations translate into their treatment of organizational leaders (Bowling *et al.*, 2010). In particular, employees likely become indifferent to leaders in response to resource-depleting perceptions of career compromise, because the associated self-deprecating thoughts about their career situation create a sense that the people in charge do not deserve personal attention (Campbell *et al.*, 2013; De Clercq, 2022). By developing dehumanized perceptions of leaders, employees can avoid a further depletion of their self-esteem resources, by penalizing these others (at least in their minds) with impersonal treatment (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). Prior studies drawing from COR theory similarly show that in work relationships marked by surface acting (Lee *et al.*, 2018) or incivility (Baker and Kim, 2021), employees rely on depersonalization to relieve their irritation with the resource-draining situations. We accordingly postulate:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive relationship between employees' perceived career compromise and their depersonalization of organizational leaders.

Employees who treat organizational leaders as impersonal objects in turn may halt voluntary work efforts from which the leaders otherwise could benefit (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2018). When employees function in a setting that makes them feel indifferent to organizational leaders, their sense of self-worth suffers, because this situation feels like a personal failure to develop effective relationships with the people in charge (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023; Zopiatis and Constanti, 2010). In turn, and as COR theory predicts, these employees might consider their *diminished* voluntary work efforts a justified behavioral reaction that helps them avoid a further drainage of their self-esteem resources. The reaction aligns with their beliefs that organizational leaders do not deserve their discretionary efforts (De Clercq and Pereira, 2021; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). That

is, depersonalization should curtail work-related voluntarism, because this form of complacency makes employees feel better about their decision to treat leaders as impersonal entities (Kang and Jang, 2019). Previous research, similarly based in COR theory, clarifies that employees are less likely to go out of their way to undertake productive work activities, such as customer-oriented behaviors (Lee *et al.*, 2018) or timely completion of work tasks (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023), when they have dehumanized perceptions of the people who are likely to be negatively affected by their complacency. We accordingly predict:

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a negative relationship between employees' depersonalization of organizational leaders and their organizational citizenship behavior.

As a useful extension of these two direct effect hypotheses, we integrate their arguments to propose a core mediation logic. Specifically, employees' depersonalization of organizational leaders constitutes a notable mechanism that explains *why* their disappointment with unwanted career adjustments might curtail their extra-role work activities. When employees feel disturbed by an employer who condones divergence between their existing career situation and their professional ambitions, they constrain their own productive work efforts beyond their job duties, because they feel indifferent about how their employer and its leaders may suffer from their work-related sluggishness (Corbeanu *et al.*, 2023). Previous studies similarly find support for a mediating effect of employees' propensities to treat other organizational members as impersonal objects in the negative link between their experience of other adverse work conditions—such as psychological contract breaches (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023), emotional dissonance (Cheung and Cheung, 2013), emotional labor (Lee *et al.*, 2018), role stress (Kang and Jang, 2019), or work-induced sleep deprivation (De Clercq and Pereira, 2021)—and their propensity to undertake discretionary work efforts. As a complement, we postulate that employees' depersonalization of

organizational leaders mediates the conversion of their experience of career compromise into thwarted organizational citizenship behavior.

**Hypothesis 3:** Employees' depersonalization of organizational leaders mediates the relationship between their perceived career compromise and their organizational citizenship behavior.

*Moderating role of conformity orientation*

The degree to which employees exhibit a conformity orientation—implying that their personal preferences reflect a desire to adhere to instead of break existing rules (Magni and Manzoni, 2020)—may mitigate the links between their perceived career compromise and depersonalization of organizational leaders (Hypothesis 1) and between this depersonalization and organizational citizenship behavior (Hypothesis 2). As predicted by COR theory, the unfavorable effects of resource-depleting work treatments and sentiments become subdued when employees can rely on personal resources that operate as protective shields against the experienced resource depletion (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). We similarly postulate that employees' conformity orientation may protect them against self-deprecating thoughts that arise with adverse career developments, as well as with the subsequent depersonalization that they exhibit toward organizational authorities.

First, employees' beliefs that they have to compromise on their career goals may translate into dehumanization of organizational leaders less powerfully if their personal orientation favors conformity. In line with COR theory, the probability that employees criticize organizational leaders for their experience of a mismatch between their current career situation and professional ambitions, to protect their self-esteem resources (De Clercq, 2022), is lower when they assign more weight to organizational than to individual interests, as is true of employees with a strong conformity orientation (Miron-Spektor *et al.*, 2011). In particular, conformists tend to seek and

maintain organizational harmony, even if doing so comes at the cost of their own professional situation (Liu and Zhou, 2021). Therefore, they likely exhibit less desire to release their disappointments with perceived career compromise through dehumanization of organizational leaders—a response that would compromise such harmony (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023). Employees with an inclination toward conformity also tend to be less judgmental about how others treat them and better able to control negative sentiments resulting from difficult work situations (Massei *et al.*, 2022; Pohling *et al.*, 2016). This ability should decrease the likelihood that they start treating organizational leaders as impersonal objects, to protect their sense of self-worth in the presence of perceived career compromise. We predict:

**Hypothesis 4:** The positive relationship between employees’ perceived career compromise and their depersonalization of organizational leaders is moderated by their conformity orientation, such that this relationship is mitigated for employees who exhibit a stronger conformity orientation.

Second, the probability that employees’ depersonalization of organizational leaders translates into reduced extra-role work activities similarly should be subdued by their conformity orientation. As postulated by COR theory, the adverse effect of exhibited indifference toward organizational leaders on employees’ willingness to undertake extra-role work behavior—which arises as a way to avoid self-damaging thoughts in the presence of suboptimal relationships with organizational leaders (Bowling *et al.*, 2010)—should be weaker if employees can rely on personal resources that help them put such indifference into perspective (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). A conformity orientation makes employees more sensitive to the possibility that poor working relationships might disrupt the harmony of the company’s internal functioning (Liu and Zhou, 2021; Miron-Spektor *et al.*, 2011). Because they prefer to comply with existing situations, including suboptimal exchanges with organizational leaders, they may be less likely to use their depersonalization of leaders as a justification to exhibit work-related complacency (Magni and

Manzoni, 2020). In essence, a conformity orientation transfers employees' focus away from their personal challenges, such as irritation with organizational leaders whom they deem unworthy of personal attention, and toward their duty to contribute to the organization's success (Kaplan *et al.*, 2009; Massei *et al.*, 2022). As a result, they are less likely to unleash leader-related frustrations by halting productive work efforts. We hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 5:** The negative relationship between employees' depersonalization of organizational leaders and their organizational citizenship behavior is moderated by their conformity orientation, such that this relationship is mitigated for employees who exhibit a stronger conformity orientation.

The combination of these arguments culminates in a moderated mediation effect (Hayes and Rockwood, 2020). Employees' conformity orientation functions as a critical boundary condition of the negative indirect link between their perceptions of career compromise and organizational citizenship behavior, through their depersonalization of organizational leaders. If employees personally prefer adhering to rules (Magni and Manzoni, 2020), their desire to act as if leaders were dehumanized objects (as a mechanism that underpins the escalation of perceived career compromise into decreased extra-role work efforts) becomes subdued. This personal orientation serves as a buffer against the diminished sense of self-worth that employees experience when they have to compromise on their career aspirations (De Clercq, 2022). Instead, they are willing to continue engaging in a certain level of work-related voluntarism, to convey their diminished propensity to dehumanize the people whom they hold accountable for their career adversity. But if they exhibit less conformist tendencies, such dehumanization offers a more prominent explanation for how perceptions of having to make career-related compromises escalate into reduced extra-role work activities.

**Hypothesis 6:** The indirect negative relationship between employees' perceived career compromise and their organizational citizenship behavior, through their enhanced depersonalization of organizational leaders, is moderated by their conformity orientation,

such that this indirect relationship is mitigated for employees who exhibit a stronger conformity orientation.

## **Research method**

### *Sample and data collection*

The empirical tests of the research hypotheses relied on cross-sectional survey data collected among employees who work in a large company that operates in the construction retail sector in Portugal.<sup>1</sup> The focus on one particular organization is intentional. It reduces the potential influence of relevant but unobserved organizational factors—such as company-level policies that put pressure on employees to exhibit work-related voluntarism (Boekhorst and Halinski, 2023)—that likely affect propensities to engage in organizational citizenship behavior but do not interfere with the focal findings in the case of a single-organization study (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Investigating one organization in one industry also diminishes potential biases due to unobserved differences in pertinent external market conditions, including volatile customer preferences, that may influence the perceived need to exhibit voluntarism at work (Hodson, 2002). The construction retail sector in Portugal is characterized by elevated levels of rivalry, with many domestic and international players that compete for market share (Coelho, 2022; Pacheco *et al.*, 2019). Organizations that operate in this setting likely derive great benefits from employees who go out of their way to contribute to their employer's success on a voluntary basis. Understanding how career-related frustrations may steer employees away from such useful discretionary efforts, and how a personal orientation such as conformity may mitigate this process, accordingly is very useful for the studied empirical context.

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<sup>1</sup> Cross-sectional research designs are prevalent in studies that test theoretical frameworks with a moderated mediation dynamic (e.g., Chirumbolo *et al.*, 2020; De Clercq and Pereira, 2022a; Mihelič *et al.*, 2024), yet they do not allow for explicit assessments of causality. We discuss causality subsequently, in the Post hoc analysis section.

We relied on the well-established translation–back-translation procedure to develop the survey instrument (van Dick *et al.*, 2018). An English version of the survey was converted into Portuguese by a translator fluent in both languages, then back-translated into English by a different bilingual translator. After a few minor discrepancies were addressed, the final survey in Portuguese was administered to a sample of 300 employees, randomly drawn from an employee list provided by the organization’s top management. The study design featured multiple measures to safeguard the participants’ rights. First, they received promises that their unique answers would be processed with complete confidentiality and would never be part of any research reports. Second, we clarified that their employer would be in no position to figure out who participated in the research or not, that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time they desired, and that there were no correct or incorrect responses to the questions. Of the 300 employees contacted, 183 completed the survey (response rate = 61%). The gender distribution of 84.7% men and 15.3% women reflects the male-dominated nature of the construction retail sector in Portugal. Finally, 62.8% of the employees had worked for the organization for longer than five years.

### *Measures*

We assessed the central constructs with well-established measurement scales that have been validated in prior research. The scales applied seven-point Likert anchors, varying between “strongly disagree” (= 1) and “strongly agree” (= 7).

*Perceived career compromise.* We captured the extent to which employees are frustrated about unwanted career adjustments with a six-item scale of career compromise (Creed and Gagliardi, 2015). Two sample items were “My current career direction is a compromise on the

interests I have” and “My current career direction is a compromise on what I really wanted to do” (Cronbach’s alpha = .931).

*Depersonalization of organizational leaders.* To assess the extent to which employees develop dehumanized beliefs about organizational leaders, we relied on a five-item scale of depersonalization (Boles *et al.*, 2000). Consistent with the conceptual focus of this study, the wording of the statements referred to “organizational leaders” specifically—such as “I don’t really care what happens to organizational leaders” and “I treat organizational leaders as if they are impersonal objects” (Cronbach’s alpha = .838). The survey clarified that this term referred to the people in charge of the company (i.e., not limited to an immediate supervisor).

*Organizational citizenship behavior.* We captured the extent to which employees engage in work activities that go beyond formal job duties with a four-item scale of organizational citizenship behavior (De Cremer *et al.*, 2009). The respondents indicated, for example, whether “If necessary, I am prepared to work overtime” and “I undertake voluntary action to protect the company from potential problems” (Cronbach’s alpha = .852). Our reliance on a self-assessed measure is consistent with extant research on work-related voluntarism (Gajda and Zbierowski, 2023; Heine *et al.*, 2023; Huang and Yuan, 2022) and with the argument that employees are better positioned to offer accurate and comprehensive insights into the extent of their own voluntary work behaviors, in comparison with other raters (e.g., peers, supervisors) who have less complete information about how much time employees actually devote to such behaviors (Chan, 2009). Employees might gear their extra-role efforts toward certain colleagues but not others, such that other-ratings likely do not span the complete spectrum of discretionary work efforts (Organ *et al.*, 2006; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2018).



*Conformity orientation.* We assessed the extent to which employees prefer to adhere to existing rules and situations with a four-item measure of conformity orientation (Miron *et al.*, 2004). Two sample items were, “I try not to oppose others” and “I adhere to accepted rules in my area of work” (Cronbach’s alpha = .778).

*Control variables.* The statistical models included several control variables. First, we gauged two demographic characteristics: employees’ *gender* (0 = male; 1 = female) and *organizational experience* (in years). Compared with their male counterparts, female employees tend to exhibit lower propensities to treat leaders in disrespectful ways (Esitiri *et al.*, 2018) but stronger propensities to support their employer with discretionary work activities (Ng and Feldman, 2011). Employees with greater organizational tenure likely are more willing to help their employer and its leadership with dedicated work efforts (Ng and Feldman, 2013). In their comprehensive review of antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior, Podsakoff and colleagues (2000) similarly cite these two variables as relevant demographic characteristics. Second, we included an individual attitude and a contextual factor as control variables. For the individual attitude, we accounted for the role of employees’ *job satisfaction*, consistent with meta-analytical reviews of the drivers of organizational citizenship behavior (LePine *et al.*, 2002; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). We measured it with four items from a well-established job satisfaction scale (Agho *et al.*, 1992),<sup>2</sup> such as “I feel satisfied with my present job” (Cronbach’s alpha = .922). For the contextual factor, we accounted for employees’ perceptions of *leader ostracism*, pertaining to the people in charge of the company, consistent with the focus of our depersonalization measure. Reviews of organizational citizenship behavior literature pinpoint leader support as a critical determinant of such behavior (LePine *et al.*, 2009; Podsakoff *et al.*,

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<sup>2</sup> One item of the original five-item scale (“I consider my job to be very unpleasant,” reverse-coded) was omitted from the analysis, due to its low reliability.

2000), and empirical research also details how employees' sense of being ostracized diminishes their willingness to undertake voluntary work efforts (Chung, 2017; Fiset *et al.*, 2023; Wu *et al.*, 2016). Our focus on a negative instead of positive form of leader behavior resonates with the nature of the proposed mediator (i.e., depersonalization), which reflects negative beliefs about organizational leaders too. Leveraging a ten-item scale of supervisor ostracism (Liu *et al.*, 2023), the respondents assessed, for example, whether "Organizational leaders ignore me at work" (Cronbach's alpha = .969).<sup>3</sup>

*Construct validity.* To evaluate the validity of the four focal constructs and the two multi-item control constructs, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of a six-factor measurement model. The statistical fit was adequate:  $\chi^2(480) = 1,107.07$ , incremental fit index = .90, Tucker-Lewis index = .88, confirmatory fit index = .90, and root mean square error of approximation = .08. Affirming the presence of convergent validity, we noted the strong significance of the factor loadings on their corresponding measurement items ( $p < .001$ ) and the values of the average variance extracted (AVE), which ranged between .51 and .78 and thus exceeded the cut-off value of .50 (Meyers *et al.*, 2017). We also found evidence of the presence of discriminant validity. First, the AVE values were greater than the squared correlations between the corresponding construct pairs. Second, the fit of the models that entailed unconstrained construct pairs (i.e., correlation between two constructs was free to vary) was significantly better than the fit of the associated constrained models (i.e., correlation coefficients between the constructs were forced to equal 1) for all six possible pairs of constructs, such that they generated chi-square difference scores higher than the cut-off value of 3.84 ( $df = 1$ ;  $p < .05$ ; Hair *et al.*, 2019).

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<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge that many other individual and contextual factors could inform employees' organizational citizenship behavior (and depersonalization). The set of control variables used herein includes representative factors for both categories: gender, organizational experience, and job satisfaction as pertinent individual characteristics or attitudes, and leader ostracism as a relevant contextual factor.

*Common source bias.* We relied on two well-recognized methods to assess the risk of common source bias. First, an exploratory factor analysis checked whether a single factor accounts for the majority of the total variance in the data (Biswas *et al.*, 2021; Sadiq, 2022). The first factor was responsible for only 33% of this variance, which mitigates concerns about our reliance on a common respondent. Second, we applied a confirmatory factor analysis to compare the fit of the six-factor model with that of a one-factor model in which all measurement items loaded on just one construct. The first model exhibited significantly better fit than the second ( $\chi^2(15) = 2,449.85, p < .001$ ), which offered additional evidence that common source bias was not an issue (Meyers *et al.*, 2017). Third, from a conceptual perspective, the probability of such bias decreases significantly when testing a complex theoretical framework that entails one or more moderated relationships, because it is difficult for research participants to comprehend or anticipate the framework's constitutive hypotheses and adjust their answers to match these expectations (Simons and Peterson, 2000).

#### *Statistical procedure*

The proposed theoretical relationships were statistically tested with the Process macro, which provides a notable benefit: Direct, mediation, and moderated mediation effects can be tested in a comprehensive instead of piecemeal manner (Hayes, 2018). This macro relies on a bootstrapping technique, which offers the additional advantage that the estimations are valid even if the estimated indirect or conditional indirect effects do not follow a normal distribution (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2004). In a first step, we applied Process macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) to estimate the indirect relationship between perceived career compromise and organizational citizenship behavior through depersonalization of organizational leaders, in combination with the corresponding direct paths that constitute the mediation connection. In a second step, we applied

Process macro Model 58 (Hayes, 2018), to estimate the moderating effect of conformity orientation on the relationship between perceived career compromise and depersonalization of organizational leaders, as well as between depersonalization of organizational leaders and organizational citizenship behavior. As defined in the Process macro, these conditional indirect effects are estimated at three different levels of the moderator, namely, the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles (labeled hereafter as the lower, intermediate, and higher levels).

## Results

### *Focal analysis*

The zero-order correlations are reported in Table 1, and the results with respect to the proposed mediated relationship, as generated from Process macro Model 4, are in Table 2.

Perceived career compromise related positively to depersonalization of organizational leaders ( $b = .098, p < .05$ ), in support of Hypothesis 1, which in turn related negatively to organizational citizenship behavior ( $b = -.211, p < .01$ ), consistent with Hypothesis 2. The assessment of the mediation effect showed an effect size of  $-.021$  for the indirect relationship between perceived career compromise and organizational citizenship behavior through depersonalization of organizational leaders. Because the confidence interval (CI) for this effect did not include 0 ( $[-.054, -.001]$ ), there is evidence of a key explanatory role of employees' dehumanized perceptions of the people in charge of the company, as predicted by Hypothesis 3.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Table 3 provides the results for the proposed moderation and moderated mediation effects. We found a negative, significant effect of the perceived career compromise  $\times$  conformity orientation product term ( $b = -.123, p < .01$ , Hypothesis 4) for predicting the depersonalization of organizational leaders, as well as a positive, significant effect of the depersonalization of

organizational leaders  $\times$  conformity orientation product term ( $b = .127, p < .05$ , Hypothesis 5) for predicting organizational citizenship behavior. The statistical results obtained from Process macro Model 58 specifically revealed that the positive relationship between perceived career compromise and depersonalization of organizational leaders was mitigated at increasing levels of conformity orientation (.237 at lower level, .083 at intermediate level, -.009 at higher level). For the second mediation equation, the results indicated similar, diminishing effects on the relationship between depersonalization of organizational leaders and organizational citizenship behavior at increasing levels of conformity orientation (-.323 at lower level, -.165 at intermediate level, -.070 at higher level). These findings corroborate Hypotheses 4 and 5.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

For the explicit evaluation of the presence of a moderated mediation effect, we assessed the strength of the conditional indirect relationship between perceived career compromise and organizational citizenship behavior through depersonalization of organizational leaders at distinct levels of conformity orientation. As the lower part of Table 3 reveals, the effect sizes decreased with rising levels of this personal resource, ranging from -.077 (lower level) to -.014 (intermediate level) to .001 (higher level). Importantly, the CIs did not span 0 for the lowest level of conformity orientation ([-.165; -.015]), but the CI included 0 at the two higher levels ([-.041; .001] and [-.014; .015], respectively). These statistical findings affirm that conformity orientation served as a buffer of the negative indirect relationship between perceived career compromise and organizational citizenship behavior through depersonalization of organizational leaders, in support of Hypothesis 6 and this study's overall conceptual framework.

*Post hoc analysis*

Due to its cross-sectional research design, our study cannot explicitly determine the direction of causality. The causality logic that we propose is anchored firmly in the well-recognized foundation of COR theory, according to which resource-draining career situations evoke employees' need to release their frustrations. This release may take the form of negative attitudes toward organizational leaders, which culminates in complacency with respect to extra-role work behaviors (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). But the personal fulfillment employees derive from their voluntary work efforts arguably might prompt less negative perceptions of their career situation too, directly or through the development of positive feelings about organizational leadership. The results that we report accordingly represent *preliminary* empirical evidence of the proposed causality logic; to test explicitly for causality, we would need to assess the focal constructs at multiple points in time (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Yet to mitigate causality concerns, at least to some extent, we ran *five* alternative mediation models (using Process Model 4 in each case). The three constructs that constitute the proposed mediation link serve as independent, mediating, or dependent variables in these models. The summary results are in Table 4, in which Model A is the theorized, focal model (for which the detailed results are in Table 2), and Models B–F are the five alternative mediation models.<sup>4</sup> The findings indicate that the indirect effect is only significant for Model A; the CI of this effect does not include zero, whereas the CIs of the five other models *do* include zero, such that their corresponding indirect effects are not significant. Even if the comparison of these six mediation models does not explicitly establish the direction of causality, it provides support of

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<sup>4</sup> The models in Table 4 include the same control variables as those in Table 2, but only the results for the focal direct and indirect relationships are reported in Table 4, for parsimony.

the validity of the proposed mediation link: Perceived career compromise diminishes organizational citizenship behavior through depersonalization of organizational leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Table 4 also indicates that Model F—in which organizational citizenship behavior leads to lower perceptions of career compromise through less depersonalization of organizational leaders—is the best among the five alternative models. The two constitutive paths in Model F are significant, even if only weakly for the second path ( $b = -.219, p < .01$  and  $b = .188, p < .10$ , respectively). We therefore ran an alternative *moderated* mediation model to extend Model F. The summary results of this extended Model H are in Table 5, which also provides the summary results for the theorized moderated mediation model (Model G, with detailed results in Table 3).<sup>6</sup> Model G is superior to Model H, because only the first path (and not second path) in Model H is significantly moderated by conformity orientation ( $b = -.068, p < .05$  and  $b = -.010, ns$ , respectively). The CIs for Model H also indicate *no* change in the significance of the conditional indirect effect across different levels of conformity orientation (i.e., all three CIs include zero). This model comparison in Table 5 thus indicates that the theorized *dual* moderating role of conformity orientation does not hold if the mediation link operates in the opposite direction.

## Discussion

With this study, we extend extant research by examining the link between employees' perceptions that they must make compromises in their careers on the one hand and their voluntary work efforts on the other, in an attempt to unpack this link and explicate factors that underpin or influence it. According to prior research, employees' willingness to undertake

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<sup>5</sup> Notably, Model A does not always generate higher coefficients for the reported direct and indirect paths, nor higher  $R^2$ -values for the direct path relationships in the mediation link, compared with the five other models. However, Model A *is* superior on the key criterion for assessing mediation, that is, whether the tested indirect relationship is significant or not (Hayes, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Similar to Table 4, the models in Table 5 include the same control variables as used in Table 3, but only the results for the focal direct and indirect (moderated) relationships are reported in Table 5, for parsimony.

organizational citizenship behavior can be undermined by their dissatisfaction with their career situation in general (De Clercq and Belausteguigoita, 2021). Specific frustrations about having to compromise personal career goals also may lead to negative work experiences or attitudes, in the form of higher career distress (Creed and Hughes, 2013) or lower career commitment (Ryu and Jeong, 2021). We *bridge* these two research strands by detailing how perceived career compromise may escalate into tarnished extra-role work efforts, as well as the personal conditions in which this escalation is more or less likely. Applying COR theory (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000), we postulate that (1) the probability of diminished work voluntarism in reaction to resource-draining career compromises can be explained by employees' propensities to treat organizational leaders as impersonal objects, but (2) their conformity orientation buffers this harmful process. The empirical results confirm these theoretical predictions.

As a first relevant theoretical insight, this study accordingly reveals that employees' beliefs about discrepancies between their current career situation and personal career ambitions turn into a diminished propensity to undertake discretionary work activities, because they become indifferent to the people who lead their organization. Employees who are convinced that their career situation is marked by compromises interpret this resource-draining organizational treatment as a signal that their employer is not concerned about their professional growth (Ryu and Jeong, 2021). In line with COR theory, they unleash their irritations by developing dehumanized perceptions of the people whom they hold accountable for this adversity and then halting their extra-role work efforts, which they regard as justified reactions to self-deprecating beliefs about their disappointing career situation (De Clercq, 2022; Hobfoll, 2001). This mediating role of depersonalization points to a process of *disengagement* through which employees—frustrated with their sense of making unwanted career compromises—take a step



back and halt their dedicated, extra-role work efforts, due to their dehumanization of the persons in charge. Further research could explicitly account for the role of such work disengagement in the theorized mediation link (Afrahhi *et al.*, 2022). These results also are useful for HR management scholarship from a theoretical perspective, in that they convey a significant danger and possibly harmful spiral, in which employees are complicit. That is, employees could benefit from developing and leveraging *productive* leader interactions, as a means to resolve their unfulfilled career expectations (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Instead, they exhibit indifference toward these leaders and reduce their work-related voluntarism, which likely undermines the possibility that leaders provide them with additional support (Indarti *et al.*, 2017).

A second pertinent, theoretical contribution relates to our findings on the role of employees' conformity orientation. As we show, depersonalization of organizational leaders provides a less prominent connection between perceived career compromise and thwarted discretionary work efforts when employees can draw from this personal orientation (Massei *et al.*, 2022). This finding offers an interesting addition to extant findings of *direct* beneficial roles, such that a conformity orientation stimulates satisfactory job experiences (Yahyagil, 2015) and ethical work behaviors (Pohling *et al.*, 2016). Drawing from COR theory (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), we complement this perspective with an indirect but no less important role: In the face of career adversity, preferences to abide by existing rules and maintain group harmony likely reduce perceived threats to employees' self-worth, so they are less keen to dismiss organizational leaders and still willing to devote some individual energy to voluntary work efforts (Liu and Zhou, 2021).

Notably, our theorizing about conformity orientation has focused on its critical role in fostering harmony seeking, but other research also indicates that a conformity orientation may

enable employees to tackle difficult situations more effectively by stimulating high-quality communication with like-minded peers (Kaplan *et al.*, 2009). Further studies, especially qualitative ones, might detail different mechanisms and establish the multiple routes by which a conformity orientation helps employees cope with career difficulties. A related research objective would be to differentiate among different types of conformists, according to their personal motives or preferences. For example, some conformists might be happy “herd members” who focus on maintaining group cohesion; others might be true believers in the strategic value of adhering to the status quo; yet others might be conservatives who are morally offended by adverse organizational treatments. It would be interesting for qualitative efforts to investigate how different conformist types respond differently to perceived career compromises, as manifest in the levels of depersonalization and work voluntarism that they exhibit.

#### *Limitations and further research directions*

In addition to pursuing the preceding qualitative research extensions, some limitations of the current study suggest areas for further research too. First, and as elaborated in the Post hoc analysis subsection, the possibility of reverse causality cannot be completely ruled out, because we assessed all the constructs at the same point in time. The proposed theoretical relationships are grounded in the well-established COR framework, the empirical findings appear consistent with what would be expected from a longitudinal study, and the comparative results in Tables 4 and 5 are generally in line with the proposed sequence of relationships. Nonetheless, due to its cross-sectional design, the current research might best be considered a *pilot* study, which can inform longitudinal research designed explicitly to address causality by estimating cross-lagged effects (Hair *et al.*, 2019). For example, such research might clarify that the central issue is not so much whether the proposed mediation dynamic works in one direction versus the other but

that it works in *both* directions, signaling a positive reinforcement cycle. In a similar vein, we did not formally measure the theorized mechanism (i.e., that employees attempt to protect their self-esteem resources) that links employees' convictions about career compromises with their depersonalization of organizational leaders and thwarted organizational citizenship behavior. Prior COR-based research pinpoints diminished self-esteem as a pertinent outcome of the experience of career compromises (De Clercq, 2022), and it explicates that work-related complacency in response to a depersonalization of leaders "appears justified [to employees] and enables them to avoid self-damaging thoughts" (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023, p. 121). Yet further longitudinal research could test sequential mediation models that formally track *changes* in employees' self-esteem resources when they react to perceived career compromise with a depersonalization of organizational leaders and then diminished work-related voluntarism.

Second, our focus on the key mediating effect of depersonalization of organizational leaders is consistent with prior studies that pinpoint a harmful role of depersonalization or dehumanization in the face of other challenging work experiences—including broken organizational promises (De Clercq *et al.*, 2023), role adversity (Kang and Jang, 2019), or discrepancies between felt and displayed emotions (Cheung and Cheung, 2013; Lee *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, compared with other relevant dimensions of burnout, the depersonalization dimension "might be the most problematic manifestation of job burnout, because it directly affects other organizational members" (De Clercq *et al.*, 2020a, p. 220). Nonetheless, it could be useful to apply the proposed framework to the other two dimensions of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (emotional exhaustion and a lack of personal accomplishment; Maslach *et al.*, 2001). For example, continued studies could test a sequential mediation model in which a perceived mismatch between employees' existing career situation and meaningful career goals first

generates thwarted personal accomplishment, which then leads to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and ultimately prompts diminished organizational citizenship behavior.

Third, our focus on the mitigating role of conformity orientation is consistent with the argument for its beneficial role, in making employees less upset with unfavorable work arrangements (Kaplan *et al.*, 2009). It would be valuable to explicate the possible buffering roles of alternative personal orientations too, including employees' duty (Hannah *et al.*, 2014) or collectivistic (Liu *et al.*, 2021) orientation. Pertinent *organizational* resources could serve as protective shields against the frustrations that come with unfulfilled career ambitions as well, such as trust in top management (Naim and Ozyilmaz, 2023) or person–organization fit (Mostafa *et al.*, 2023). It would be insightful to undertake a comparative analysis of the relative usefulness of these various resources in protecting employees against career circumstances that make them feel underappreciated, as well as to examine how the buffering role of conformity orientation compares with that of other moderators.

### *Practical implications*

This research on the combined roles of perceived career compromise and conformity orientation, in shaping employees' depersonalization of organizational leaders and subsequent organizational citizenship behavior, has great relevance for HR management practice. Employees should acknowledge a risk that arises from their beliefs about a mismatch between their current career situation and their meaningful career goals. This mismatch may render them not only indifferent to the people who oversee the company but, somewhat counterintuitively, also unwilling to engage in extra-role work activities that otherwise could add meaning to their work functioning (Lin *et al.*, 2020). Employees who feel disturbed by having to make unwanted career adjustments may take the adverse professional situation as a justification for not caring any more

about the people who are in charge of the organization, which then escalates into work-related sluggishness. A related difficulty is that some employees may be reluctant to speak up about their career-related disappointments, particularly in plenary sessions, for fear that doing so could make their precarious situation even worse (Ng and Feldman, 2012). To mitigate such reluctance, HR managers could establish *private*, person-to-person communication channels with dedicated representatives of the HR department or ombudspersons, to address formal complaints about unfair career development with complete confidentiality (Myers and Witzler, 2014).

However, for some employers, it may be impossible to avoid requiring employees to make career-related compromises, such as when hypercompetitive external markets force them to reorganize employees' career paths (Lin and Huang, 2023). To avoid a detrimental cascade though, in which employees' adverse beliefs about their career situation escalate into thwarted work-related voluntarism, HR managers might assess the degree to which employees value conformity over rule breaking (Massei *et al.*, 2022), then attune company-level selection and retention policies to these propensities, in an effort to protect against the likelihood of a negative spiral. This recommendation is not meant to suggest, of course, that organizations should demand subservience or blind obedience. Rather, by encouraging a healthy dose of consensus seeking, organizations and employees can avoid situations in which employees, frustrated with unwanted career adjustments, shoot themselves in the proverbial foot by becoming sluggish in their discretionary work efforts, and, unintendedly, leave negative impressions on the people who decide about their future career opportunities.

### *Conclusion*

This investigation pinpoints the detrimental effects of employees' perceptions of inconsistencies between their career situation and their professional ambitions on their

depersonalization of organizational leaders and subsequent propensity to be a “good organizational soldier.” It also establishes a useful, mitigating role of employees’ conformity orientation. A desire to act toward organizational leaders as if they were impersonal objects is a core channel through which employees’ beliefs that their career situation is marked by compromises thwart voluntarism at work, but this mechanism also depends on employees’ propensity to abide by prevailing rules. We hope these insights function as catalysts for further examinations of how employees and their employers can mitigate the risk that disappointing career situations translate into work-related complacency that likely exacerbates instead of resolves the experienced challenges.

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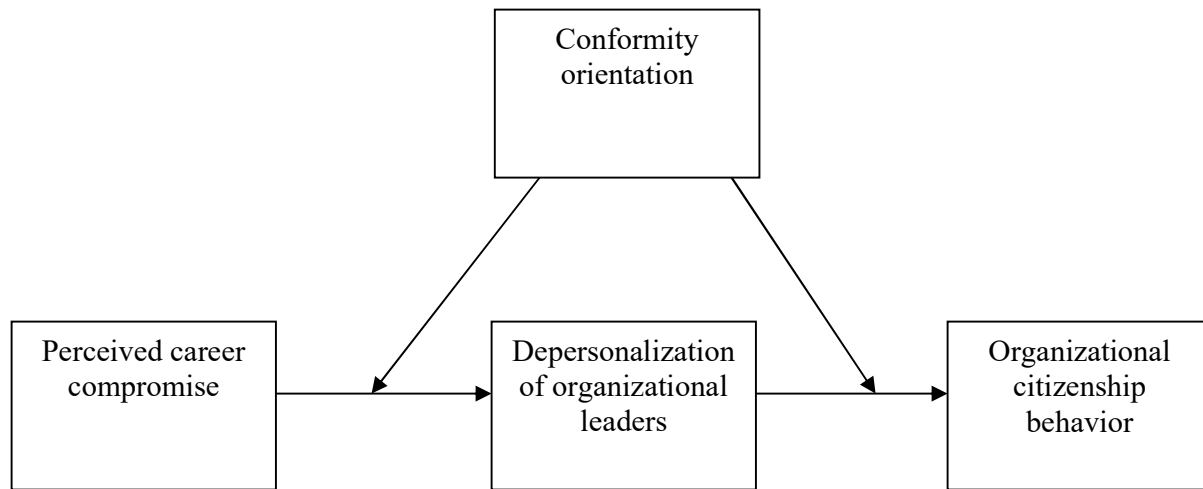
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**Figure 1.** Conceptual model



*Source:* Authors' own creation.

**Table 1.** Correlation table and descriptive statistics

|                                                   | 1       | 2       | 3      | 4      | 5     | 6     | 7       | 8     |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| 1. Perceived career compromise                    |         |         |        |        |       |       |         |       |
| 2. Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders | .313**  |         |        |        |       |       |         |       |
| 3. Organizational citizenship<br>behavior         | -.196** | -.357** |        |        |       |       |         |       |
| 4. Conformity orientation                         | -.079   | -.245** | .522** |        |       |       |         |       |
| 5. Gender (1 = female)                            | .200**  | .019    | -.141  | -.037  |       |       |         |       |
| 6. Organizational experience                      | .045    | -.034   | .000   | -.156* | .025  |       |         |       |
| 7. Job satisfaction                               | -.424** | -.507** | .186*  | .068   | -.104 | .022  |         |       |
| 8. Leader ostracism                               | .170*   | .472**  | -.161* | -.109  | .041  | -.046 | -.458** |       |
| Mean                                              | 3.305   | 2.840   | 5.829  | 5.361  | .153  | 2.486 | 5.367   | 2.562 |
| Standard deviation                                | 1.525   | 1.155   | 1.117  | 1.077  | .361  | 1.433 | 1.644   | 1.090 |

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

Source: Authors' own creation.

**Table 2.** Mediation results (Process macro Model 4)

|                                                | Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders | Organizational citizenship<br>behavior |       |       |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Gender (1 = female)                            | -.181                                          | -.331 <sup>+</sup>                     |       |       |
| Organizational experience                      | -.039                                          | .057                                   |       |       |
| Job satisfaction                               | -.220***                                       | .005                                   |       |       |
| Leader ostracism                               | .302***                                        | .017                                   |       |       |
| Perceived career<br>compromise                 | .098*                                          | -.053                                  |       |       |
| Conformity orientation                         | -.206**                                        | .489***                                |       |       |
| Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders |                                                | -.211**                                |       |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                 | .382                                           | .352                                   |       |       |
|                                                | Effect size                                    | Bootstrap SE                           | LLCI  | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                | -.021                                          | .014                                   | -.054 | -.001 |

Notes: n = 183; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Source: Authors' own creation.



**Table 3.** Moderated mediation results (Process macro Model 58)

|                                                                                                                                       | Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders | Organizational citizenship<br>behavior |       |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Gender (1 = female)                                                                                                                   | -.175                                          | -.323 <sup>+</sup>                     |       |       |
| Organizational experience                                                                                                             | -.032                                          | .052                                   |       |       |
| Job satisfaction                                                                                                                      | -.238***                                       | .011                                   |       |       |
| Leader ostracism                                                                                                                      | .272***                                        | .027                                   |       |       |
| Perceived career<br>compromise                                                                                                        | .099*                                          | -.051                                  |       |       |
| Conformity orientation                                                                                                                | -.279***                                       | .508***                                |       |       |
| Perceived career<br>compromise × Conformity<br>orientation                                                                            | -.123**                                        |                                        |       |       |
| Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders                                                                                        |                                                | -.181*                                 |       |       |
| Depersonalization of<br>organizational leaders ×<br>Conformity orientation                                                            |                                                | .127*                                  |       |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                        | .409                                           | .369                                   |       |       |
| Conditional <i>direct</i> relationship between perceived career compromise and<br>depersonalization of organizational leaders         |                                                |                                        |       |       |
|                                                                                                                                       | Effect size                                    | Bootstrap SE                           | LLCI  | ULCI  |
| Low level                                                                                                                             | .237                                           | .069                                   | .100  | .374  |
| Intermediate level                                                                                                                    | .083                                           | .050                                   | -.015 | .181  |
| High level                                                                                                                            | -.009                                          | .062                                   | -.132 | .113  |
| Conditional <i>direct</i> relationship between depersonalization of organizational leaders and<br>organizational citizenship behavior |                                                |                                        |       |       |
|                                                                                                                                       | Effect size                                    | Bootstrap SE                           | LLCI  | ULCI  |
| Low level                                                                                                                             | -.323                                          | .091                                   | -.502 | -.144 |
| Intermediate level                                                                                                                    | -.165                                          | .077                                   | -.317 | -.012 |
| High level                                                                                                                            | -.070                                          | .099                                   | -.265 | .126  |
| Conditional <i>indirect</i> relationship between perceived career compromise and<br>organizational citizenship behavior               |                                                |                                        |       |       |
|                                                                                                                                       | Effect size                                    | Bootstrap SE                           | LLCI  | ULCI  |
| Low level                                                                                                                             | -.077                                          | .039                                   | -.165 | -.015 |
| Intermediate level                                                                                                                    | -.014                                          | .011                                   | -.041 | .001  |
| High level                                                                                                                            | .001                                           | .007                                   | -.014 | .015  |

Notes: n = 183; SD = standard deviation; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Source: Authors' own creation.

**Table 4.** Comparison of six mediation models (Process macro Model 4)

| Model A: PCC → DOL → OCB (focal model, detailed in Table 2) |             |              |                    |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|-------|
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| PCC → DOL                                                   | .098*       |              |                    |       |
| DOL → OCB                                                   |             |              | -.211**            |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .382        |              | .352               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | -.021       | .014         | -.054              | -.001 |
| Model B: PCC → OCB → DOL                                    |             |              |                    |       |
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| PCC → OCB                                                   | -.074       |              |                    |       |
| OCB → DOL                                                   |             |              | -.206**            |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .322        |              | .409               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | .015        | .016         | -.007              | .055  |
| Model C: DOL → PCC → OCB                                    |             |              |                    |       |
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| DOL → PCC                                                   | .214*       |              |                    |       |
| PCC → OCB                                                   |             |              | -.053              |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .226        |              | .352               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | -.011       | .015         | -.047              | .012  |
| Model D: DOL → OCB → PCC                                    |             |              |                    |       |
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| DOL → OCB                                                   | -.222**     |              |                    |       |
| OCB → PCC                                                   |             |              | -.117              |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .348        |              | .231               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | .026        | .034         | -.024              | .112  |
| Model E: OCB → PCC → DOL                                    |             |              |                    |       |
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| OCB → PCC                                                   | -.158       |              |                    |       |
| PCC → DOL                                                   |             |              | .083 <sup>+</sup>  |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .219        |              | .409               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | -.013       | .014         | -.047              | .008  |
| Model F: OCB → DOL → PCC                                    |             |              |                    |       |
|                                                             | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |
| OCB → DOL                                                   | -.219**     |              |                    |       |
| DOL → PCC                                                   |             |              | .188 <sup>+</sup>  |       |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                              | .399        |              | .231               |       |
|                                                             | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |
| Indirect effect                                             | -.041       | .027         | -.103              | .003  |

Notes: n = 183; PCC = perceived career compromise; DOL = depersonalization of organizational leaders; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; UCLI = upper limit confidence interval.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

*Source:* Authors' own creation.

**Table 5.** Comparison of two moderated mediation models (Process macro Model 58)

| Model G: PCC → DOL → OCB, moderated by CO (focal model, detailed in Table 3) |             |              |                    |       |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|-------|--|
|                                                                              | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |  |
| PCC → DOL                                                                    |             |              |                    |       |  |
| CO → DOL                                                                     |             |              |                    |       |  |
| PCC × CO → DOL                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| DOL → OCB                                                                    |             |              |                    |       |  |
| CO → OCB                                                                     |             |              |                    |       |  |
| DOL × CO → OCB                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| Conditional indirect effect                                                  | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |  |
| Low level                                                                    | -.077       | .039         | -.165              | -.015 |  |
| Intermediate level                                                           | -.014       | .011         | -.041              | .001  |  |
| High level                                                                   | .001        | .007         | -.014              | .015  |  |
| Model H: OCB → DOL → PCC, moderated by CO                                    |             |              |                    |       |  |
|                                                                              | Mediator    |              | Dependent variable |       |  |
| OCB → DOL                                                                    |             |              |                    |       |  |
| CO → DOL                                                                     |             |              |                    |       |  |
| OCB × CO → DOL                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| DOL → PCC                                                                    |             |              |                    |       |  |
| CO → PCC                                                                     |             |              |                    |       |  |
| DOL × CO → PCC                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| R <sup>2</sup>                                                               |             |              |                    |       |  |
| Conditional indirect effect                                                  | Effect size | Bootstrap SE | LLCI               | ULCI  |  |
| Low level                                                                    | -.039       | .034         | -.111              | .026  |  |
| Intermediate level                                                           | -.052       | .038         | -.140              | .005  |  |
| High level                                                                   | -.059       | .059         | -.201              | .032  |  |

Notes: n = 183; PCC = perceived career compromise; DOL = depersonalization of organizational leaders; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CO = conformity orientation; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

<sup>+</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Source: Authors' own creation.