

## The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange in the Relationship between Organizational Justice and Job Insecurity<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study delves into the context of organizational settings by exploring the role that organizational justice (OJ) and leader-member exchange (LMX) can have on perceived job insecurity (JI). This study was based in the theoretical perspective of Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT). The sample comprises 357 workers from the Balkan region, with most of them (64.7%) working in private companies. Findings showed that dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, informational) and LMX have significant positive correlations, while organizational justice has a significant negative correlation with JI. Furthermore, mediation analysis showed that relations between the dimensions of organizational justice and JI were partially mediated by LMX. The theoretical implications of this study serve to further understand the potential role LMX may have in an organizational environment and to further expand Uncertainty Management Theory. The practical implications of this study could contribute to both employees' well-being and better work-related outcomes. Future research avenues are discussed.

*Keywords:* organizational justice, leader-member exchange, job insecurity, uncertainty management theory

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## **The Mediating Role of Leader-Member Exchange in the Relationship between Organizational Justice and Job Insecurity**

In today's rapidly changing organizational environment, job insecurity has become a near universal organizational phenomenon (Lee et al., 2006). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438) describe Job Insecurity (or JI) as a "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Another definition of JI is that it is a perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment with such a perception being based on the current experience that the worker is having (Shoss, 2017). The nature of JI has been commonly noted to be two-fold. Mainly, there are two distinct points of view: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative point of view places JI as a threat in the sphere of employment relationships (Hellgren et al., 1999) and emphasizes the perception of an employee regarding job related conditions. If the employee perceives that job related conditions do not match what he believes is adequate, JI may occur consequently. According to multiple studies (Boswell et al., 2014; Folkman & Lazarus 1985) conditions which are viewed as threats (the conditions that have potential to be harmful or incur loss) lead to higher levels of JI. The quantitative point of view holds the qualitative one in its core, but further expands the potential of possible events which can induce a high level of JI. This point of view proposes that it is necessary to take into account all possible (and different) aspects that may lead to an increase, or to a pronounced level, of JI in employees (De Witte 2005; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). One of such aspects may be a lack of organizational justice perceptions.

Organizational justice refers to the perspective of what is fair in an organizational environment (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013). Organizational justice has four dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice and interpersonal/informational justice.

Distributive justice refers to people's perceptions of the fairness of distributions of rewards or resources (Homans, 1961). Such resources can be either tangible (e.g. money) or intangible (e.g. love). Distributive justice perceptions are based on processes of comparison with others, with comparisons being undertaken in two factors – outcomes and inputs. Outcomes refer to what people (or in this case, workers) receive from their place of work (such as salary, benefits, status or rewards). Input refers to people's (or workers') contributions to their work (work experience, effort, the quality and quantity of produced products, etc.). If workers perceive that they are being treated fairly and receive adequate rewards, they feel more loyal to the organization of which they are a part of (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the manner in which outcomes are determined (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013). Procedural justice is defined as having a voice in proceedings (Thibaut & Walker, 1976). Having a voice means that the person has the capacity to influence outcomes (not necessarily determine them). In addition to voice, Leventhal (1980) adds more factors to procedural justice such as: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness and ethicality. In an organizational environment, if workers have the perception

that the decision-making procedure is fair, they tend to show greater loyalty and contribution to the interests of both leaders and organizations (Vanić et al., 2019).

Interactional justice states that people consider fairness in terms of the manner in which outcomes and procedures are explained (Bies, 2001). These authors argue that people (or workers) demand adequate explanations which are presented in a dignified and respectful manner; as such, these explanations are perceived to be fair. If such demands are not met, workers believe that they have been treated poorly and as a result their expectations have been violated. Interactional justice has been shown to successfully mitigate employees' negative reactions to distributive and/or procedural injustices (Greenberg, 1990a, 1994, 2006b). Also, it is considerably easier for managers (or team leaders) to promote this type of justice, given how they have more opportunities to do so (Greenberg, 2009b).

Interpersonal/informational justice refers to the treatment of people (in this case, workers) with dignity and respect (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013). Such a treatment can demonstrate that leaders care about their subordinates' (or team members) personal feelings and well-being. This form of justice refers to the process of giving workers (or people) clear and thorough explanations about the procedures which are used in order to determine outcomes (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013).

According to Greenberg (1996), there exist a plethora of opportunities to judge fairness (or justice) in an organizational environment, with far reaching implications. This judgment plays a deciding role in how workers feel about their jobs (or organizations) and the way which they approach doing their job. If the judgment is negative, the workers in question feel like they have not been treated fairly or that they are victims of organizational injustice. Proof of this can be found in studies done by Törestad (1990) and Fitness (2000), in which being treated unfairly was the most identified work-related aspect that made workers feel enraged. According to a study done by Skarlicki and Kulik (2005) the worker does not even have to be the one that is being treated unfairly. Uninvolved parties that have the opportunity to observe others who are not being treated fairly report adverse emotional reactions to such situations. According to Karnes (2009), unethical behavior by organizations can lead to doubts in the employer-employee relationship and the most important ethical concern is organizational justice. Organizational justice is a fundamental value of an organization (Rawls, 1971) and can therefore influence employees' perception of JI.

There have been various studies which examined the relationship between organizational justice and JI. A study which examined this relationship showed that the relationship between these two variables does not seem to be direct (Loi et al., 2012). Another study (Chowwen & Ivensor, 2009) examined this relationship and found that the procedural dimension of organizational justice had a significant impact on the level of JI. In a recent study done by De Angelis et al. (2021) results showed that organizational justice has a buffering effect between JI and job performance. The most concrete evidence of this relationship can be found in a meta-analysis study done by Chang and Chen (2008). In this study it was noted that a perspective which emphasizes the lack of procedural justice increases JI. Furthermore, both interactional and interpersonal/informational justice may diminish the impact of JI,

as it was found that sharing information about organizational and group goals and/or including employees in decision making and problem-solving aspects, serves as a boost or an increase in employees' perceptions of control which can reduce JI perceptions. With the results from these studies in mind and within the framework of Uncertainty Management Theory, we propose organizational justice as an important antecedent of job insecurity.

Another aspect which has recently been brought into attention is the possible effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on JI. According to our knowledge, such a notion has not been thoroughly examined and researchers (Wang et al., 2019) have called for a further investigation of this possible connection.

The leader-member exchange (LMX) paradigm focuses on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between the team leader and team members in organizational hierarchies (Dansereau et al., 1975). The relationship between leader and member is dyadic in nature. The meaning of this can be interpreted as such that each member of a work-group can have different types (or better put, quality) of relationships with the team leader. According to Graen and Uhl-Bien's work (1995) every dyadic interaction is situated in the backdrop of diverse LMX relationships. The different qualities of LMX relationships are formed based on the leader's behavior in general, which means that those behaviors are varied in nature. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) propose that the behaviors of exchange between a group leader and work-group members led to distinct qualities in their relationship. The impact of LMX on work outcomes is thought to be in line with the very nature of such relationships and the rapport which a leader forms with the entirety of the work-group (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008). Given that every relationship can be of either higher or lower quality, Henderson et al. (2009) came up with the phrase – LMX differentiation. LMX differentiation refers to the dynamic and interactive exchanges that occur in the LMX relationships. The nature of such interactions may differ from dyad to dyad within the whole work-group (Henderson et al. 2009).

A study which was done by Park et al. (2015) tested whether a change in organizational justice would have a positive or negative effect on future LMX (with the current organizational justice level being held constant). Study results show that a better perception of organizational justice led to a higher quality LMX relationship, posting the idea that organizational justice may be a predictor of LMX. Such a notion was confirmed in a study done on home soil with three dimensions of organizational justice being statistically significant predictors of LMX (Vanić et al., 2019). Subsequent studies have proposed the idea that LMX may act as a mediator between organizational justice and work-related outcomes. LMX has shown to be a successful, both partial and complete mediator of organizational justice in relations to work performance (Wang et al., 2010), organizational citizenship behavior (Burton et al., 2008), work-engagement (Hassan & Jubari, 2010), psychological well-being and creativity (Abbas et al., 2021), voluntary learning behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2009), employee engagement (Samad et al., 2022) and many others. One interesting study (Loi et al., 2012) proposed that high levels of organizational justice and an ethical leader can play a role in coping with one's perceived job insecurity. This

brought into question the relationship between LMX and job insecurity. A study by Wang et al. (2019) demonstrated results which show that the relationship between LMX and JI may be boundary. According to the authors, this omission represents a gap in the literature as social environments could play a role in how work stressors are perceived, one of which being perceived job insecurity. Furthermore, the authors propose that LMX may be involved in the shaping of perceived job insecurity, with high quality LMX relationships diminishing the negative view of perceived job insecurity. The mentioned studies reveal that both organizational justice and LMX may play a role in attenuating the impact of perceived job insecurity. Additionally, it was revealed that LMX and perceived job insecurity may have a boundary relationship. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that LMX can mediate organizational justice impact. Therefore, drawing on the Uncertainty Management Theory (UMT) we proposed that JI may be influenced by four dimensions of organizational justice (distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice) and that such an influence may be mediated by LMX. In line with our insights this is the first study that attempts to unearth the link between all of the dimensions of organizational justice and JI seeing how previous studies took into account one or two of the mentioned dimensions.

## **Theoretical Perspective and Hypothesis**

To tie all the mentioned variables together we rely on Uncertainty Management Theory. Uncertainty management theory (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002) recognizes that fairness (or justice) is closely linked to perceived uncertainty. This is because individuals (or in this case, workers) tend to rely on fairness information when they face situations that hold a degree of uncertainty. According to this theory, workers need a certain amount of predictability. Therefore, they tend to focus on available environmental cues which can reduce the uncertainties that arise in their lives (and workplace). One of such cues is fairness or organizational justice. According to Tyler and Lind (1992), employees look for fairness information in order to determine whether they are valued members of the organization of which they are a part of. Expanding on this, Lind (2001) proposes that fairness information is used by the workers in order to determine whether or not they should identify with the organization to which they belong (if they do identify, this information also serves to determine the quantitative aspect of how much they should identify with the organization). Thau et al. (2007) acknowledge that fairness information may become very important for employees who possess a high level of uncertainty. This is because fairness (or justice) plays a role in reducing employees' anxiety about the possibility of exclusion or exploitation of the organization to which they belong (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). Therefore, it is unsurprising that in a study done by Colquitt et al. (2006) results reveal that fair treatment makes workers feel that future events are more predictable and controllable. This kind of perceived control should help to reduce employee uncertainty about job continuity. From the four dimensions of organizational justice,

it is believed that procedural justice has the strongest link to JI. Previously mentioned researchers, namely Lind and Tyler (1988) proposed that procedural justice acts as a signal to employees about their status and standing in their respective organization. In particular, it was shown that employees who perceive greater procedural justice have a stronger sense that they are respected and valued members of the organization (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2001). Therefore, they should have less uncertainty (or JI) about their work position in their organization. As for the other dimensions of organizational justice, research done by Masterson et al. (2000), suggests that the quality of the relationship between employees and their organizations, as well as their relationship with their leader (or supervisor) acts as a mediator of the effects of fairness (organizational justice) perceptions on employee outcomes. Furthermore, Masterson et al. (2000) propose that acts of fairness work as contributions that enhance the quality of ongoing relationships. These relationships affect both organizational and leader relationships. It is believed that these contributions create obligations for employees, where they feel a need to reciprocate the source of the fair treatment as a means of preserving the quality of different relationships. This work, in combination with the work done by multiple different authors (Cropanzano et al., 2002; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002), support the notion (or perspective) by demonstrating that LMX links leader-referenced justice perceptions (or, as it is more popularly defined - interactional justice) to employee outcomes, therefore putting LMX in a mediator role between them. In these papers (Cropanzano et al., 2002; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002), it was also found that organizational exchange relationship perceptions can influence organization-referenced justice perceptions (or as we defined them – procedural justice and distributive justice), therefore impacting employee outcomes. In a study done by Takeuchi et al. (2012) results show that there is a high impact of organizational justice dimensions on uncertainty outcomes. The study was based on Uncertainty Management Theory. Two more studies which focused on the effect organizational justice has on JI and uncertainty (Loi et al., 2012; Wolfe et al., 2018) confirm the effect within the theoretical framework of Uncertainty Management Theory. As we mentioned earlier, a study done by Wang et al. (2019) proposed the idea that LMX may mediate JI, and called for further exploration of this possibility. With mentioned links between organizational justice, LMX and JI, and using the theoretical framework of Uncertainty Management Theory we want to answer these calls and expand the literature on this particular topic which has so far been under-investigated. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The relationship between distributive justice and job insecurity will be mediated (partially or fully) by LMX.

H2: The relationship between procedural justice and job insecurity will be mediated (partially or fully) by LMX.

H3: The relationship between interpersonal justice and job insecurity will be mediated (partially or fully) by LMX.

H4: The relationship between informational justice and job insecurity will be mediated (partially or fully) by LMX.

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

The sample comprises 357 respondents (60.2% of which are female), with the age range being from 19 to 67 years ( $M=36.10$ ;  $SD=9.80$ ). A large number of the surveyed employees have stated that they have higher education degrees, starting from bachelor's at 31.4% then master's studies at 33.6% and lastly 9.2% for postgraduate studies. There were notably fewer employees with a high school degree (19.3%) than those with higher schooling. Most of the respondents live in either a large or smaller urban area (91.9%) with the rest living in rural areas. Employment contract duration has also been taken into account, with most of the respondents claiming that they are employed for an indefinite period of time (80.7%). The average working experience (calculated by years of work) is 10.39 years ( $SD=8.34$ ), with the largest work experience being 36 years, and the lowest being 1 year of work experience. Most of the employees stated that they work in a private company (64.7%), while the rest work in organizations in the public sector. In general, the spread of jobs that the employees do is heterogeneous. This research is a part of a larger study conducted on the same sample, which explored topics in an organizational context. We obtained our sample via online survey (using convenience sampling). The study was conducted from July to September of 2023 in a Serbian language speaking area. A page which explained the purpose of study, anonymity of the results and the terms and conditions of the study was set up. Before the respondents were able to fill in the results they were asked if they agreed with the mentioned terms. All of the respondents volunteered to take part in this study.

### Measures

**Organizational Justice Scale (Colquitt, 2001; adaptation by Mirković, 2014).** This study used the multi-dimensional questionnaire to determine employees' perception of organizational justice. The dimensions of the questionnaire are: distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice and informational justice. The entire questionnaire consists of 20 statements, with responses being given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "*I completely disagree*" to 5 = "*I completely agree*". Example of an item "The level of compensation reflects the effort that I put into my work". The author of the adaptation (Mirković, 2014) noted that Cronbach's internal consistency of the entire scale is  $\alpha = .93$ , with the dimensions of organizational justice having the following Cronbach values – distributive justice  $\alpha = .91$ , procedural justice  $\alpha = .87$ , interactional justice  $\alpha = .92$ , informational justice  $\alpha = .94$ .

**Member Exchange Questionnaire (LMX-7; Graen/Uhl-Bien 1995, adaptation by Strukan, 2019).** To determine the quality of LMX, this study used a one-dimensional questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 7 statements with responses being given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "*I completely*

*disagree*” to 5 = “*I completely agree*”. Example of an item “To which degree are you informed about how satisfied or unsatisfied your leader is with your work?”. The author of the adaptation (Strikan, 2019) noted that Cronbach’s internal consistency of the questionnaire is  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Perceived Job Insecurity Questionnaire (Silbereisen/Reitzle/Pinquant, 2006; adaptation by Todorović, 2015)**, was used in order to determine the level of JI. This is a one-dimensional questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 5 statements with responses being given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = “*I completely disagree*” to 5 = “*I completely agree*”. Example of an item “There is a greater risk of losing my job”. The author of the adaptation (Todorović, 2015) noted that Cronbach’s internal consistency of the questionnaire is  $\alpha = .80$ .

## Data Analysis

To analyze the data, we used the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 26.0. We used the following descriptive statistics - mean, standard deviation, percentages, skewness, and kurtosis, correlation techniques – Pearson’s correlation coefficient. Mediation analysis was done by an extension program for SPSS named PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). Indirect effects were considered significant if the 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) did not include the value 0 ( $p < .05$ ) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## Results

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 and the results of the correlation analysis in Table 2.

**Table 1**

*Results of descriptive statistics of the variables used in the study*

Variables	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>Ku</i>	$\alpha$
Organizational justice	1.20	5.00	3.38	.85	.07	-.65	.94
Distributive justice	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.3	-.24	-1.2	.96
Procedural justice	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.0	.96	-.61	.90
Interpersonal justice	1.42	5.00	4.06	.83	-.82	.47	.88
Informational justice	1.00	5.00	3.68	.94	-.45	-.68	.89
LMX	1.14	5.00	3.75	.94	-.46	-.68	.87
Job insecurity	1.00	5.00	2.25	.86	.51	-.15	.72

*Note.* *M* – mean; *SD* – standard deviation; *Sk* – Skewness (distribution asymmetry coefficient); *Ku* – Kurtosis (distribution asymmetry coefficient);  $\alpha$  – Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of internal consistency.



Most of the distributions are negatively skewed, indicating that the answers for questionnaire particles have a tendency to be higher. The values of the Kurtosis suggest that the distributions are not pronounced at their extremes, but this is not problematic because the values are far from the critical limit (+/- 2), for this parameter, which indicates the distribution is normal. The values of Cronbach's alpha reliability show that all questionnaires (and dimensions) reach the necessary threshold of reliability which is supposed to be  $< .70$ . Most of the mentioned Cronbach values are in line with what the authors who adapted the questionnaires have noted in their studies.

Results from the correlation analysis show that all of the dimensions of organizational justice are positively correlated to each other (Table 2). Furthermore, all dimensions of organizational justice also have a positive correlation with LMX. These results show that a higher level of justice is linked to a better (or higher) quality relationship between subordinate and leader. Lastly, both LMX and the dimensions of organizational justice have significant negative correlations with job insecurity.

**Table 2**

*Intercorrelation between the variables using Pearson's correlation coefficient*

	Organizational justice	Distributive justice	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Informational justice	LMX
Organizational justice						
Distributive justice	.79***					
Procedural justice	.92***	.70***				
Interpersonal justice	.65***	.26***	.48***			
Informational justice	.82***	.47***	.65***	.61***		
LMX	.66***	.46***	.54***	.54***	.65***	
Job insecurity	-.49***	-.31***	-.39***	-.43***	-.51***	-.49***

Note. \*\*statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

We will examine our postulated hypothesis of the mediating role that LMX may have in the relationship between the dimensions of organizational justice and job insecurity. The following tables hold these predictors: distributive justice - Table 3, procedural justice – Table 4, interpersonal justice – Table 5 and lastly, informational justice – Table 6.

**Table 3***Indirect, direct and total effects of distributive justice on job insecurity through LMX*

Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>c</i>	Confidence interval	
LMX	.458***	-.447***	-.205***	-.109**	-.204***	-.262	-.152

*Note:* *a* – effect of the predictor on the mediator; *b* – the effect of the mediator on the criterion; *ab* – indirect effect of the mediator in the relationship between predictor and criterion; *c'* – direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the effect of the mediator is controlled; *c* – total effect; fully standardized effects were used; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .005$ .

The result from the mediation analysis shows that the effect that distributive justice has on LMX is positive and that the effect LMX has on job insecurity is negative (Table 3). The direct effect that LMX has on job insecurity when distributive justice is controlled is negative, with confidence intervals showing that the impact is significant. The direct effect distributive justice has on job insecurity is negative and significant, with the total effects of the entire model being negative and significant. These results show that LMX is a partial mediator in the relationship between distributive justice and job insecurity.

The result from the mediation analysis shows that the effect that procedural justice has on LMX is positive and that the effect LMX has on job insecurity is negative (Table 4). The direct effect that LMX has on job insecurity when procedural justice is controlled is negative, with confidence intervals showing that the impact is significant. The direct effect procedural justice has on job insecurity is negative and significant, with the total effects of the entire model being negative and significant. These results show that LMX is a partial mediator in the relationship between procedural justice and job insecurity.

**Table 4***Indirect, direct and total effects of procedural justice on job insecurity through LMX*

Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>c</i>	Confidence interval	
LMX	.542***	-.399***	-.216***	-.181***	-.326***	-.280	-.157

*Note:* *a* – effect of the predictor on the mediator; *b* – the effect of the mediator on the criterion; *ab* – indirect effect of the mediator in the relationship between predictor and criterion; *c'* – direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the effect of the mediator is controlled; *c* – total effect; fully standardized effects were used; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .005$ .

**Table 5**

*Indirect, direct and total effects of interpersonal justice on job insecurity through LMX*

Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>c</i>	Confidence interval	
LMX	.547***	-.373***	-.204***	-.226***	-.445***	-.275	-.143

*Note:* *a* – effect of the predictor on the mediator; *b* – the effect of the mediator on the criterion; *ab* – indirect effect of the mediator in the relationship between predictor and criterion; *c'* – direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the effect of the mediator is controlled; *c* – total effect; fully standardized effects were used; \*\*\**p*<.001, \*\**p*<.005.

The result from the mediation analysis shows that the effect that interpersonal justice has on LMX is positive and that the effect LMX has on job insecurity is negative (Table 5). The direct effect that LMX has on job insecurity when interpersonal justice is controlled is negative, with confidence intervals showing that the impact is significant. The direct effect interpersonal justice has on job insecurity is negative and significant, with the total effects of the entire model being negative and significant. These results show that LMX is a partial mediator in the relationship between interpersonal justice and job insecurity.

**Table 6**

*Indirect, direct and total effects of informational justice on job insecurity through LMX*

Mediator	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ab</i>	<i>c'</i>	<i>c</i>	Confidence interval	
LMX	.654***	-.281***	-.184***	-.330***	-.469***	-.255	-.112

*Note:* *a* – effect of the predictor on the mediator; *b* – the effect of the mediator on the criterion; *ab* – indirect effect of the mediator in the relationship between predictor and criterion; *c'* – direct effect of the predictor on the criterion when the effect of the mediator is controlled; *c* – total effect; fully standardized effects were used; \*\*\**p* < .001, \*\**p* < .005.

The result from the mediation analysis shows that the effect that informational justice has on LMX is positive and that the effect LMX has on job insecurity is negative (Table 6). The direct effect that LMX has on job insecurity when informational justice is controlled is negative, with confidence intervals showing that the impact is significant. The direct effect informational justice has on job insecurity is negative and significant, with the total effects of the entire model being negative and significant. These results show that LMX is a partial mediator in the relationship between informational justice and job insecurity.

## Discussion

The conceptual framework that we have proposed suggests that the quality of the relationship between the way employees perceive organizational justice and their relationship with their work-group leader (LMX) have a significant impact on how

they perceive organizational outcomes, specifically perceived job insecurity (JI). Building on previous research which postulates that organizational justice may play a role in diminishing employees' perception of JI, and answering the call of authors to further explore the relationship between LMX and JI, we proposed a number of hypotheses to test these assumptions.

The first hypothesis we proposed positions LMX as a mediator in the relationship of distributive justice and JI. The results show that LMX was a partial mediator in the relationship, meaning that both LMX and distributive justice had a significant negative effect on JI. These findings are in line with what Cropanzano et al. (2007) suggested, and confirms that the perception of distributive justice within an organizational setting can have a massive effect on how the workers feel about their work and company. If they perceive that they are being treated fairly (in comparison to others) and receive adequate rewards, they are more loyal to the organization of which they are a part of. Additionally, this study has managed to identify that the role LMX has when it comes to JI is significant and negative, meaning that higher quality relationships between employees and their work-group leader acts as a factor in lowering perceived JI levels, which may have an effect on ongoing discourse surrounding the crucial role of leadership quality in employees' well-being.

The second hypothesis we proposed positions LMX as a mediator in the relationship of procedural justice and JI. The results show that LMX was a partial mediator in the relationship, meaning that both LMX and procedural justice had a significant negative effect on JI. These findings are in line with the findings of previous studies (Loi et al., 2012; Takeuchi et al., 2012; Wolfe et al., 2018). We believe that this is because the employees' perception of having the ability or opportunity to voice their opinions on multiple different aspects of job-related propositions makes them feel more comfortable and valued as a part of their respective organization. Such a feeling reduces the perception of potentially losing one's job.

The third hypothesis we proposed positions LMX as a mediator in the relationship of interpersonal justice and JI. The results show that LMX was a partial mediator in the relationship, meaning that both LMX and interpersonal justice had a significant negative impact on JI. These findings are in line with previous studies (Greenberg, 1990a, 1994, 2006b; Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013). The findings that were obtained in our study suggest that when employees receive treatment from their work-group leaders that is based in dignity and respect they tend to feel less anxious about their job position. The relationship that interpersonal justice achieved with LMX is also something that has been noted in literature (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013). Given how the relationship between leader (or manager) and subordinate is dyadic and situated in the backdrop of diverse LMX relationships (leaders have different relationships with all of their subordinates), leaders have more opportunities to promote this type of justice. Therefore, it is believed that it is easier to promote interpersonal justice (Greenberg, 2009b) and efforts to make this type of justice a focal point in creating a healthier work environment should be considered.

The fourth hypothesis we proposed positions LMX as a mediator in the relationship of informational justice and JI. The results show that LMX was a partial

mediator in the relationship, meaning that both LMX and informational justice had a significant negative impact on JI. This is in line with what Greenberg and Colquitt (2013) proposed. According to our knowledge, we do not have any relevant studies on this topic. We believe that the direct relationship between informational justice and JI is due to the fact that having more valid/precise information about organizational outcomes can reduce employees' anxiety about their position within an organization, therefore lowering employees' perception of JI. The connection between this type of justice and LMX seems obvious, as it is mostly down to the leaders to share such information. Furthermore, if the manner in which they do so is perceived to be respectful then both the relationship with the leader (positively) and JI (negatively) will be impacted.

Lastly, we found that LMX does indeed play a mediator role in the relationship between organizational justice and JI, as it was shown that JI is lower when LMX is higher (when there is a high-quality leader-member relationship). A notion to explore this particular relationship was called for by authors (Wang et al., 2019) and we believe that these results could answer the posed questions and clarify the relationship between the two constructs. Additionally, these findings support earlier work of authors who found that LMX mediated the relationship between organizational justice (procedural, distributive and interactional) and organizational outcomes (Cropanzano et al., 2002; Masterson et al., 2000; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002).

From a theoretical standpoint this study adds a new viewpoint to the literature by answering the calls of researchers to explore the relationship that LMX may have with JI. Study findings serve to further understand the potential role LMX has in an organizational environment, opening possibilities for further exploration of the effect it might have (in both practical and theoretical terms). Additionally, study results contribute to the growing literature relying on Uncertainty Management Theory framework by illuminating the role that LMX has in the relationship between organizational justice and JI. These findings serve to advance the theoretical standpoint by understanding how leaders can impact and shape employees' job experience (and therefore, organizational success). The interplay between organizational justice and LMX provides a valuable insight into factors which can play protective roles in spheres of both workplace well-being and organizational success. Further exploration of this relationship is necessary in order to confirm these findings. Future research avenues may include other ethical concerns and organizational variables such as perceived organizational support, organizational social responsibility, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, well-being, current worker affect state, burnout etc.

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest the role that leaders can have in shaping work-related outcomes, therefore organizations should focus on having their leaders engage in respectful and open relationships (and communication) with their subordinates – with such relationships being truthful in nature. Additionally, the possibility that employees may voice their opinions and their opinions be heard and taken into account, can serve to increase their loyalty to the organization of

which they are part of. This can lead to an environment where both concerns and challenges can be openly discussed. Organizations should invest in programs that will teach their leaders to not only communicate better but also acquire skills which can help in recognizing potential signs of stress in their subordinates, and deal with such matters in a timely manner. Therefore, we propose that a holistic approach should be adopted which we believe can lead to a better and more healthy work environment.

This study, although it makes significant contributions to the understanding of the proposed concepts and their relationship is not without limitations. The sample size, even though it is considerably large, can be increased in future research and there may be some concerns about its heterogeneity. Although it offers a decent amount of diversity, the sample could introduce potential confounding factors that may influence results, with the biggest being the possibility to generalize these results. Therefore, we believe that a specific, homogenous sample could address these concerns. Furthermore, the study sample consists only of respondents who were willing to partake in the study, with no type of probability sampling being used. Such an approach may lead to the introduction of factors which may in turn influence results. Future studies should address this issue by using some form of probability sampling. Additionally, a longitudinal approach would be valuable, as seeing how all of the variables are perception based and can be susceptible to change over time. Further points of concern are that the measures were self-reported and administered online, which means that study authors did not have the ability to oversee the respondents. It may be possible that some of them did not even read the questions and that they made multiple responses. Given that this study was a part of a larger study which consisted of a dozen variables, such proceedings present a valid point of concern. The best solution to this is a face-to-face administration of measures which we believe should be addressed in future studies. Finally, LMX is a variable which can only be assessed for workers who actually have supervisors (leaders, bosses etc.); therefore, study results cannot be generalized for workers who work solitary jobs (e.g., work for hire) or are in charge of their own company.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study underscore the positive impact that both LMX and dimensions of organizational justice have in reducing the employees' perceived threat in relation to their job position. Our study aligns with existing literature about the topic in hand and also adds a new viewpoint to the topic by answering the calls of researchers to explore the relationship that LMX may have with JI. Additionally, our findings illuminate the role that organizational justice has on JI, both directly and via mediation (through LMX), which adds to the concurrent literature that has been lacking in the department of informational justice specifically. We acknowledge that the interplay of organizational justice and LMX can have interesting implications, opening a possible avenue for future research on this relationship. Therefore, we

postulate that larger, more diverse samples in following studies can add to our understanding of these concepts and organizational outcomes. Furthermore, this study contributes to the Uncertainty Management Theory by elucidating the mediating role that LMX has between organizational justice and job insecurity, thus serving the purpose of advancing the theoretical framework by providing understanding how LMX can shape organizational outcomes. From a practical standpoint our study illuminates both the protective aspects that organizational justice and LMX have in relation to one's JI, highlighting the importance of building a high-quality relationship between a leader and a subordinate. These findings can contribute to both employees' well-being and work-related outcomes. However, our study does have limitations about the heterogeneity of the sample, the cross-sectional design of the study and the way that the measures were administered. Future research should focus on obtaining a homogenous sample and a longitudinal approach, both of which would add to the understanding of these concepts while also paving the way for a more healthy and successful work environment.

In essence, our research demonstrated the interplay between organizational justice and LMX, providing valuable insight into factors which can reduce workers JI. The identification of LMX as a mediating variable which can play a protective role in determining workers JI contributes to the broader scope of literature on workplace well-being. As for future studies on this topic (and similar topics), using larger sample sizes, a more homogenous sample and a multi-method approach could serve to unravel further complexities of this relationship.

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## **Medijatorska uloga lider-član razmene u odnosu između organizacione pravde i percipirane nesigurnosti posla**

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### **Apstrakt**

Ova studija je sprovedena u kontekstu organizacionog okruženja putem istraživanja uloge koju organizaciona pravda i razmena lider-član (LMX) mogu imati u vezi sa percipiranom nesigurnošću posla (JI). Ova studija je zasnovana na teorijskoj perspektivi Neizvesnog Menadžmenta (UMT). Uzorak studije se sastoji od 357 radnika iz Balkanskog regiona, pri čemu većina radnika (64.7%) radi u privatnim organizacijama. Nalazi sugerišu da dimenzije organizacione pravde (distributivna, proceduralna, interpersonalna, informaciona) i LMX imaju značajne pozitivne korelacije, dok organizaciona pravda ostvaruje značajnu negativnu korelaciju sa JI. Nadalje, rezultati medijacione analize pokazuju da su odnosi između dimenzija organizacione pravde i JI delimično posredovani putem LMX-a. Teorijske implikacije ove studije služe za dalje razumevanje potencijalne uloge koju LMX može imati u organizacionom okruženju kao i za proširenje teorije Neizvesnog Menadžmenta. Praktične implikacije ove studije se tiču mogućeg doprinosa generalnoj dobrobiti zaposlenih kao i poboljšanja ishoda povezanih sa poslom. Diskutovalo se o nedostacima studije kao i budućim istraživačkim putevima.

*Ključne reči:* organizaciona pravda, lider-član razmena, percipirana nesigurnost zaposlenja, teorija neizvesnog menadžmenta

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