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Transparent Leadership and Interactional Justice in CEO-Communication: The Impact on Psychological Safety and Employee Voice during Organizational Change.

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Introduction

In today's professional landscape, where individuals dedicate a significant portion of their lives to their careers, fostering a work environment that promotes well-being is essential. Effective communication plays a pivotal role in this endeavor, as it not only enhances employee satisfaction but also contributes to organizational success (Curado et al., 2022). Research indicates that clear and consistent communication is foundational in building trust and supporting employee well-being (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2025). Furthermore, organizations that prioritize open communication channels experience improved employee engagement and performance (Gallup, 2022). Therefore, understanding and implementing effective communication strategies is crucial for cultivating a workplace where employees feel valued and motivated.

However, this well-being does not come without constraints; organizational change has become a defining feature of modern work life. As organizations face increasing pressure to innovate, restructure, and adapt, the need for effective leadership communication becomes especially salient. In this context, CEOs play a pivotal symbolic role, shaping the organization's emotional tone and communicative climate. Change processes often evoke uncertainty, resistance, and fear among employees – emotions that, if left unaddressed, can hinder adaptation and erode morale (Yue et al. 2022). In such moments, employees' willingness to engage proactively and speak up is contingent on their sense of psychological safety – the belief that they can express concerns or ideas without fear of negative repercussions (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Building this sense of safety depends not only on individual leadership style, but also on perceptions of fairness and transparency. Within this research landscape, interactional justice, comprising interpersonal and informational dimensions, has emerged as a critical determinant

of employee trust, satisfaction, and commitment (Colquitt et al., 2001; Qi et al., 2023). Interpersonal justice refers to respectful and dignified treatment, while informational justice involves the adequacy and clarity of communicated information (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1990). These justice signals are particularly consequential during organizational change, when employees look to leaders for guidance and reassurance. Specifically, fair treatment and adequate explanations have been found to mitigate anxiety, reduce resistance, and reinforce engagement (Skarlicki, 1997; He et al., 2017; Kim & Mauborgne, 1998).

Although many studies have examined justice in the context of direct supervisors, the unique role of CEO communication during change remains underexplored. While employees may not interact with CEOs daily, research shows that the CEO functions as a highly symbolic leader figure whose behavior sets expectations for the organization (Men, 2015; O'Reilly et al., 2024). CEOs shape not only strategic decisions, but also organizational culture, vision, and legitimacy, especially during high-stakes moments of transition. Employees' perceptions of top management are closely linked to their overall morale, trust in the organization, and willingness to remain engaged (Men, 2015). As such, CEO communication plays a crucial role in establishing the psychological and emotional tone of the organization.

Equally important is the concept of transparent leadership, which emphasizes openness, consistency, and accountability in leader communication. Transparent leaders share relevant information, articulate motives, acknowledge shortcomings, and invite feedback (Norman et al., 2010; Vogelsang et al., 2013). Particularly during change, transparency fosters psychological safety by reducing uncertainty and enhancing employee understanding (Choi et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2022; Men, 2015;).

Despite these insights, important research gaps remain. First, interactional justice is frequently treated as a single construct, yet empirical evidence underscores the need to distinguish between interpersonal and informational justice due to their different psychological

mechanisms and behavioral outcomes (Fouquereau et al., 2020). Moreover, although both transparency and justice have been studied independently, their combined effects, particularly during organizational change and within hierarchical contexts, remain poorly understood (Norman et al., 2010). Furthermore, existing studies have largely overlooked the role of the CEO as a communicative actor, despite calls for more research into top leadership's role in shaping psychological safety, trust, and engagement (Qi et al., 2023; Hoekx, 2024).

This thesis addresses these research gaps by investigating how specific communicative signals – namely interpersonal justice, informational justice, and transparency framing – affect employee psychological safety and voice behavior during organizational change. Practically, this study aims to offer specific guidance on how CEOs can enhance employees' psychological safety through targeted communication strategies.

This thesis investigates the following research questions:

How do the two dimensions of interactional justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice and transparency framing in CEO communication influence employees' psychological safety and their willingness to engage in voice behaviors during organizational change? Furthermore, how do these communicative signals interact to shape employees' perceptions of safety and openness to engage in voice behaviors?

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

This research builds upon a well-established body of literature on interactional justice, transparent leadership, psychological safety, and employee voice – constructs that have proven central to understanding communication processes in organizations. Organizational and workplace justice, in particular, has been extensively theorized and empirically validated, not only for its ethical and normative significance but also for its demonstrable impact on employee performance, trust, and organizational effectiveness (Adamovic, 2023; Tyler, 2000; Colquitt et al., 2001; Rahim et al., 2000).

More specifically, research has demonstrated that providing adequate explanations, such as justifications for unfavorable decisions, significantly improves employees' perceptions of fairness and can mitigate adverse reactions to negative outcomes (Bies & Shapiro, 1987).

Furthermore, studies have highlighted that interactional justice frequently exerts a stronger influence on trust, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors than other forms of justice such as procedural or distributive justice (Barling & Phillips, 1993). Employees place high value on fair communication practices, including accuracy, honesty, and respect, which shape perceptions of fairness even when outcomes are unfavorable (Sousa & Vala, 2002). Conversely, the absence of fair interpersonal treatment can erode trust, leading to disengagement and reduced willingness to share ideas or provide feedback. Interactional justice is particularly instrumental in conflict management, trust-building, and maintaining authority, especially in high-stakes scenarios such as organizational change, procedural deviations, or layoffs (Naumann & Bennett., 1995; Paterson & Cary, 2002). These fairness evaluations can be conceptualized within Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958), which explains how employees respond to perceived investments with reciprocal behaviors.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a robust framework to understand the interplay between leadership communication, perceptions of justice, and employee behaviors. Rooted in the foundational work of Homans (1958), SET conceptualizes social interactions as exchanges of tangible and intangible resources, governed by principles of reciprocity and fairness. These reciprocal exchanges form the basis for trust, mutual obligation, and sustained engagement in organizational settings.

A key implication of SET is that employees evaluate leadership behavior, including communicative acts as part of an ongoing exchange. When leaders exhibit interpersonal justice through respectful treatment and informational justice through transparent and adequate

communication, these behaviors are perceived as relational investments or social rewards. In turn, employees are more likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, including increased trust, voice, and engagement (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958).

SET has remained a cornerstone of organizational behavior research for over six decades. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) provide a comprehensive review of its application in management and communication science, emphasizing its relevance for understanding organizational trust, justice, and leader–member exchange. More recently, Ahmad et al. (2023) reaffirm SET’s theoretical utility in analyzing workplace behavior, positioning it as a gold standard for understanding how fairness perceptions translate into behavioral responses. The core mechanisms of the theory, reciprocity, trust-building, and perceived obligation, have proven robust across contexts and over time, reinforcing its value in contemporary organizational communication scholarship.

Blau’s (1964) extension of SET places particular emphasis on the role of legitimacy and moral authority in leadership. Leaders who communicate transparently and empathetically during organizational change signal their commitment to fair and reciprocal relationships. These communicative behaviors strengthen employees’ trust in leadership and reinforce perceptions of psychological safety, a prerequisite for discretionary behaviors such as voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Yue et al., 2022). In contrast, perceived violations of reciprocity, such as disrespect or withholding information, may erode trust and trigger withdrawal or silence.

Thus, SET offers a theoretically grounded and empirically validated lens for analyzing how CEO communication, particularly fairness and transparency cues, shapes employees’ relational and behavioral responses. These insights are especially salient during organizational change, when perceptions of support, justice, and trust are critical for sustaining employee engagement and open communication. Building on this exchange-based logic, organizational justice theory

offers a more granular lens through which fairness perceptions can be categorized and evaluated.

Organizational Justice Theory- Interactional Justice

Rooted in SET, organizational justice theory further conceptualizes how employees evaluate fairness in their exchange relationships. The classic tripartite model distinguishes between distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes and tangible rewards, such as salary, resources, and promotions. Employees assess whether their contributions are compensated relative to their efforts and outputs (Greenberg, 1987; Kiura & Kim, 2023; Skarlicky, 1997).

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of processes and decision-making procedures within the organization. Relevant aspects include whether employees are allowed to participate in decisions affecting their work, whether clear explanations are provided for managerial decisions, and whether expectations are communicated transparently (Fuller & Hester, 2001; Greenberg, 1987; Kiura & Kim, 2023).

The third dimension, interactional justice, is most central to this thesis. It focuses on the fairness of interpersonal treatment and the adequacy of information shared during organizational processes (Bies & Moag, 1986; Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1987).

Among the three dimensions of organizational justice, this thesis focuses on interactional justice due to its communicative nature. Interactional justice further comprises two dimensions: interpersonal justice, emphasizing respect, dignity, and sensitivity in leader-employee interactions (Fouquereau et al., 2020; Fuller & Hester, 2001.), and informational justice, which pertains to the transparency, accuracy, and adequacy of information shared by leaders (Greenberg, 1990). Together, they illuminate how leaders' communication practices influence employee perceptions of fairness, trust, and loyalty.

Interactional justice is particularly significant during organizational change processes, a period often marked by uncertainty and resistance. Therefore, transparent and empathetic communication reduces ambiguity, aligns employees with organizational goals, and fosters trust (Deekeling & Arndt, 2019). While much research focuses on direct supervisor-subordinate relationships, the focus on CEO's in this context is missing. This study highlights the role of CEOs in shaping organizational communication climates. CEOs, through their communication practices, can signal respect and provide clarity, significantly influencing employees' perceptions of justice and their responses to change (Men, 2014; Men, 2015).

From a social exchange perspective, transparent leadership may amplify the value of justice-related communication by increasing the authenticity and relational sincerity of the leader. Self-disclosure about setbacks can enhance the moral credibility of justifications and explanations (Bies & Shapiro, 1987), thus reinforcing perceptions of informational justice.

Organizational Change

Interactional justice becomes particularly critical during organizational change processes, where heightened uncertainty, stress, and ambiguity often prevail. Klendauer and Deller's (2009) study on managerial commitment during corporate mergers highlights that interactional justice has a stronger impact on managers' affective commitment than procedural or distributive justice. These findings also align with fairness heuristic theory, which posits that interpersonal interactions serve as the foundation for initial fairness judgments that shape trust and overall perceptions of fairness (Lind, 2001).

Effective communication is also identified as a cornerstone of successful organizational change by Elving (2005), who argues that it reduces uncertainty and fosters trust and community within organizations. Communication serves dual purposes: it provides employees with essential information about their roles, responsibilities, and organizational policies while also building trust and organizational identification.

The role of leadership communication in shaping employees' responses to change is explored by Luo et al. (2016), who demonstrate that leaders' communication styles significantly influence employees' cognitive and emotional reactions. Clear and empathetic communication from leaders reduces fear, fosters positive emotional experiences, and builds commitment to change efforts. These findings collectively highlight the importance of interactional justice in leadership communication during times of change.

CEO Communication

In times of change, the CEO plays a uniquely visible and symbolic leadership role. As the most powerful figure within the organization, the CEO shapes the communicative climate and employees' broader sense of fairness and engagement (Men, 2015; O'Reilly et al., 2024). Similarly, Wang and Sun (2022) expand on this perspective by providing empirical evidence of the CEO's pivotal role in shaping firm outcomes, particularly in driving innovation and overall success.

Men (2015) further emphasizes employees' desire for effective communication and strong relationships with their CEOs. Her research suggests that different levels of organizational leadership affect internal communication practices and effectiveness to varying degrees. This underscores the unique and critical role CEOs play in leadership communication, as their influence extends across all organizational levels.

Transparent Leadership

Transparent leadership refers to the extent to which leaders communicate with openness, clarity, and honesty, including the disclosure of relevant decision-making information, emotional expressiveness, and receptiveness to feedback (Norman et al., 2010). At its core, it is characterized by consistency between a leader's internal values and external expressions, an alignment that fosters credibility, trust, and psychological engagement (Choi et al., 2024;

Norman et al., 2010). Particularly during organizational change, transparency helps employees navigate uncertainty and maintain a sense of stability and shared purpose (Men, 2014; Elving, 2005). Accordingly, it is hypothesized that CEO communication marked by (a) high interpersonal justice, (b) high informational justice, and (c) transparent disclosure of personal setbacks will lead to greater psychological safety and employee voice.

H1a: Employees will perceive (a) higher psychological safety and demonstrate (b) a greater propensity to engage in voice behaviors when exposed to CEO communication characterized by high interpersonal justice during organizational change, compared to communication characterized by low interpersonal justice.

H1b: Employees will perceive (a) higher psychological safety and demonstrate (b) a greater propensity to engage in voice behaviors when exposed to CEO communication characterized by high informational justice during organizational change, compared to communication characterized by low informational justice.

H1c: Employees will perceive (a) higher psychological safety and demonstrate (b) a greater propensity to engage in voice behaviors when exposed to CEO communication that is transparent about personal setbacks during organizational change, compared to communication that emphasizes personal achievements.

To empirically examine transparent leadership in high-stakes communication, this thesis draws on research distinguishing between leader self-disclosures of personal setbacks versus personal successes (Choi et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2022). This distinction is conceptualized as a framing strategy that captures how transparency is enacted and interpreted in leader communication. Accordingly, the two communicative styles are referred to as *failure framing* and *achievement framing*. These framings represent theoretically distinct approaches to leader self-disclosure and are expected to interact with perceptions of justice and authenticity. The specific operationalization of these conditions is detailed in the methodology section.

Interactional Justice and Leadership

Ismail and Abd Razak (2017) emphasize that communication, participation, and performance appraisals are critical determinants of employees' perceptions of fairness. Their study aligns with the broader justice literature, which consistently highlights the centrality of fairness in managerial interactions. Similarly, Qandeel and Kuráth's (2023) systematic review underscores the pivotal role of leadership styles in shaping interactional justice. Leaders who treat employees with dignity and respect significantly enhance perceptions of fairness, reinforcing findings from Barling and Phillips (1993), who demonstrated that interactional justice more strongly influences trust in management, affective commitment, and withdrawal behaviors than procedural or distributive justice.

Asfahn et al. (2022) further investigate the relationship between justice by supervisory and workplace conflict, mediated by employees' perceptions of psychological safety. Drawing on social exchange theory, their findings reveal that high justice positively impacts psychological safety while reducing conflict.

Psychological Safety and Leadership Communication

Psychological safety, as introduced by Kahn (1990) and further developed by Edmondson (1999), refers to a shared belief that individuals can express ideas or concerns without fear of negative repercussions. It is a foundational construct that enables risk-taking communication behaviors, such as raising concerns or proposing innovations. Psychological safety thrives in environments where leaders foster trust and open dialogue through respectful treatment and transparent communication (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Conversely, its absence often leads to employee silence, suppressing valuable input critical for organizational learning and adaptation (Liang et al., 2012; Zhao & Olivera, 2006).

A substantial body of research has highlighted the role of leadership communication in shaping psychological safety. Detert and Burris (2007) found that managerial openness

encourages employees to speak up by reducing the perceived risks associated with voice behaviors. Transformational and transparent leadership styles create environments where employees feel supported in expressing concerns or suggestions.

Psychological safety has since emerged as a central concept in organizational research. Edmondson and Bransby (2022) emphasize its growing empirical relevance across more than 180 studies, particularly in relation to upward communication. When employees perceive psychological safety, they are significantly more likely to engage in voice behaviors, thereby contributing to learning, innovation, and organizational responsiveness.

The Role of Transparent Leadership in Shaping Voice and Psychological Safety

Building on these foundations, recent scholarship has increasingly explored how transparent leadership further enhances psychological safety and voice behaviors. Transparent leadership plays a critical role in shaping employee perceptions of trust, authenticity, and psychological safety, all of which are central to voice behavior. Defined by openness, honesty, and consistency between values and actions, transparent communication fosters relational credibility and reinforces employees' willingness to speak up (Choi et al., 2024; Norman et al., 2010). A particularly salient expression of transparent leadership is leader self-disclosure, especially the voluntary admission of personal setbacks. Empirical research demonstrates that such disclosure enhances perceived authenticity by signaling vulnerability and accountability, thereby reducing status asymmetries between leaders and employees (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Jiang et al., 2022). When leaders acknowledge mistakes, they normalize fallibility and model psychological safety as a legitimate expectation. In turn, employees are more likely to express concerns or ideas without fear of negative consequences (Smeets et al., 2021).

The symbolic value of transparency is further amplified by leader status. As high-status figures, CEOs act as reference points for behavioral norms throughout the organization. Drawing on social learning theory, recent findings suggest that transparent leadership not only

affects individual-level trust but also shapes broader communicative climates. When CEOs demonstrate openness in the face of vulnerability, employees are more likely to replicate such behavior, reinforcing a culture of constructive dialogue and mutual transparency (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Although transparent leadership and interactional justice have typically been examined in isolation, emerging scholarship points to their theoretical complementarity. Interactional justice comprises two distinct but related dimensions: interpersonal justice, defined by respectful, polite, and sincere treatment (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt et al., 2001), and informational justice, which concerns the adequacy, clarity, and honesty of the information provided during organizational processes (Greenberg, 1990). While interpersonal justice establishes a relational baseline for fairness, informational justice shapes employees' cognitive evaluations of leader credibility and communicative transparency. When leaders combine these justice dimensions with transparent self-disclosure, especially regarding personal failures, the perceived authenticity of their communication is intensified (Jiang et al., 2022; Lemoine et al., 2019).

This convergence of fairness and vulnerability signals both relational respect and informational integrity, thereby enhancing psychological safety more effectively than any single cue alone. In this way, transparent leadership may amplify the communicative impact of both interpersonal and informational justice, creating a climate conducive to voice behavior. Accordingly, this study proposes that transparent leadership interacts with interactional justice to shape perceptions of psychological safety and voice. These propositions are formally tested in the following interaction hypotheses:

H2a: Employees will perceive (a) higher psychological safety and demonstrate (b) a greater propensity to engage in voice behaviors when exposed to CEO communication characterized by the interaction of high interpersonal justice and transparency about personal setbacks.

H2b: Employees will perceive (a) higher psychological safety and demonstrate (b) a greater

propensity to engage in voice behaviors when exposed to CEO communication characterized by the interaction of high informational justice and transparency about personal setbacks.

Employee Voice

A pivotal behavioral outcome influenced by interactional justice is employee voice, defined as the discretionary expression of ideas, concerns, or suggestions aimed at improving organizational functioning (Detert & Burris, 2007). Voice behaviors are inherently risky, as they may challenge authority or disrupt the status quo (Liang et al., 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Voice behaviors are critical for organizational adaptability and innovation but have also been found to be contingent on employees' perceptions of psychological safety (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

Leadership communication has emerged as a central driver in creating these enabling conditions for voice. A growing body of literature highlights the significant influence of leaders' communicative behaviors in fostering employee voice. Yue et al. (2022) emphasize the pivotal role of leaders' communication styles in encouraging employee voice, defined as the discretionary expression of ideas, suggestions, or concerns aimed at improving team or organizational functioning.

Further reinforcing these insights Qi et al. (2023) explored the relationship between inclusive leadership, organizational justice, psychological safety, and employee voice. Their study defines voice behavior as the constructive expression of ideas or challenges intended to enhance work conditions. The results indicate that when employees perceive high levels of psychological safety, they are more likely to engage in voice behaviors without fear of negative repercussions.

In line with prior research emphasizing the mediating role of psychological safety in leadership communication (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), this study further investigates whether the effects of CEO communication on voice behavior operate indirectly

through employees' perceptions of psychological safety. Specifically, it is hypothesized to mediate the relationships between (a) interpersonal justice (b) informational justice and (c) transparency about personal setbacks versus achievements and employees' willingness to speak up during organizational change.

H3a: Employees' perceptions of psychological safety will mediate the relationship between CEO communication varying in interpersonal justice and employee voice during organizational change.

H3b: Employees' perceptions of psychological safety will mediate the relationship between CEO communication varying in informational justice and employee voice during organizational change.

H3c: Employees' perceptions of psychological safety will mediate the relationship between CEO communication varying in transparency framing and employee voice during organizational change.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach used to empirically test the hypotheses, detailing participant selection, vignette design, and measures employed.

This thesis employs a factorial survey experiment design to investigate the effects of interactional justice on perceptions of psychological safety and voice behaviors in workplace contexts. Vignettes are short, systematically constructed descriptions of situations or individuals, designed to represent multidimensional stimuli (Baguley et al., 2022). They are particularly suited for this study as they allow the controlled manipulation of the different dimensions of interactional justice and transparent communication, while preserving contextual realism.

The vignette experiment is a powerful tool for examining complex social judgments and decision-making processes, as it allows researchers to isolate and manipulate individual

characteristics of a scenario systematically (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010; Barrera et al., 2024). In this study, vignettes were constructed to vary across the dimensions of interactional justice and transparent leadership. This approach ensures that the influence of each dimension can be assessed independently, reducing the risk of confounding effects typically associated with real-world correlations between variables (Baguley et al., 2022; Barrera et al., 2024).

Vignette Design

The vignettes were constructed based on theoretical frameworks and prior empirical research on the dimensions of interactional justice and transparent leadership. Each vignette represents a workplace communication scenario with systematically varied characteristics, ensuring the manipulation of independent variables while keeping the background context constant (Dafoe et al., 2018). The scenario in this thesis described a CEO communicating a specific change process to all employees in a town hall meeting, with variations in the interactional justice and transparent leadership, achievement versus failure framing. This approach enhances the realism and ecological validity of the study by making the vignettes contextually relevant and engaging for participants (Baguley et al., 2022; Sauer et al., 2020). Atzmüller and Steiner (2010) emphasize the importance of pretesting vignettes to ensure that participants interpret them as intended. Following their guidelines, a pretest was conducted to validate the manipulation of vignette dimensions and confirm that the scenarios are realistic and comprehensible and accurately reflected the intended dimensions.

Interactional justice was operationalized through its two primary dimensions: interpersonal justice and informational justice, as validated by prior research (Adamovic, 2023; Greenberg, 1988). These dimensions are used to systematically manipulate the vignettes and assess their influence on employees' perceptions of fairness.

Interpersonal Justice refers to the degree of respect, courtesy, and professionalism displayed by supervisors during communication. High interpersonal justice is characterized by respectful

and polite treatment of employees, even in challenging situations (Greenberg, 1988). For the vignettes, high interpersonal justice is operationalized through descriptions of the CEO addressing employees with professionalism, acknowledging their concerns, and demonstrating respectful interpersonal behavior. Conversely, low interpersonal justice is reflected in curt, impersonal communication that lacks consideration for employees' feelings, conveying disrespect and undermining relational trust (Tyler, 2000).

Informational Justice focuses on the quality and transparency of information provided by supervisors. High informational justice is operationalized by the inclusion of clear, detailed, and comprehensive explanations of the merger's objectives, benefits, and steps involved, as well as honest and transparent responses to employee questions. This aligns with the emphasis on adequate causal accounts, as sincere and reasonable justifications enhance fairness perceptions (Bies, 1987). Low informational justice, in contrast, is operationalized by brief, vague, or incomplete explanations, lacking in transparency or detail. Such communication fails to address employees' informational needs, exacerbating uncertainty and dissatisfaction (Paterson & Cary, 2002).

As mentioned in the theoretical section, transparent leadership was operationalized via two self-disclosure frames: failure framing (CEO admits a past mistake) and achievement framing (CEO highlights prior success).

Failure framing refers to the voluntary disclosure of personal setbacks, such as mistakes made during past organizational changes. This form of communication has been shown to increase perceptions of authenticity, as such disclosures violate strategic self-presentation norms and thus appear less manipulative (Lemoine et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2022). The relational risk involved, particularly when initiated by high-status figures like CEOs, makes the gesture seem vulnerable and disarming, fostering psychological safety and interpersonal trust (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, failure framing signals a norm

of openness, normalizes fallibility, and reduces power asymmetries, all of which promote employee voice (Smeets et al., 2021).

In contrast, *achievement framing* involves strategically emphasizing personal strengths or prior successes in leading change. While this type of communication can reinforce perceptions of competence, it may also appear selectively curated and less authentic, especially when not balanced with acknowledgment of challenges (Jiang et al., 2022). Furthermore, achievement framing can elicit unintended social effects: it may provoke status threat, reduce psychological closeness, or raise expectations in ways that undermine long-term relational credibility (Men, 2014; Norman et al., 2010). Prior research suggests that overly polished self-presentation may be perceived as impression management, thereby dampening its relational impact.

The vignettes were matched in length and tone except for the manipulated content. To describe the scenario, each of the participants will receive the same background information on the scenario:

“Your company is undergoing a significant merger with a competitor. The CEO has scheduled a town hall meeting to address all employees about the upcoming changes.”

Study Design

To evaluate psychological safety, the scale developed by Edmondson (1999) was adapted. This adaptation involved altering the tone to focus on the immediate outcomes after the town hall meeting. The psychological safety scale solely focused on the immediate reactions participants have after the meeting, specifically regarding their perceived safety to take interpersonal risks and engage in open communication within the organization. This approach is consistent with prior work in this domain (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Liang et al., 2012).

For the variable employee voice, the scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998), and subsequently refined by Liang et al. (2012) was employed. Since this study examines intentions

related to speaking up, the scale was adapted to reflect future-oriented statements, changing the items to a “I would” format. This modification helps capture the participants’ willingness and intention to engage in voice behaviors post-meeting. The focus of this scale is on proactive and critical suggestions for improvement, particularly aimed at identifying opportunities for enhancing organizational processes. As the study is centered on organizational-level perceptions of employee voice, the scale was adjusted accordingly to align with this broader context.

Importantly, proactive personality was included as a covariate for employee voice, as it represents a stable dispositional factor shown to significantly influence voice behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007; Trifiletti et al., 2017). Individuals high in proactive personality tend to take initiative and challenge the status quo, which may independently drive their likelihood to engage in upward communication. Controlling for this trait allows for a more precise estimation of the effects of the experimental manipulations on communicative intentions.

All scales utilized a 7-point Likert-type scale to ensure consistency and ease of interpretation. The Likert-type scale ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” providing a reliable method for measuring participants' perceptions and intentions.

Statistical Analysis

Sample

Participants were recruited through Prolific, an online panel, ensuring a diverse sample representative of the working population. Data was collected in the US since CEOs are more prominent in this cultural context, thus making it easier for the participants to identify with the provided scenario (Norman et al., 2010). A Power analysis was conducted to determine the appropriate sample size required to detect meaningful effects with sufficient statistical power. The chosen effect size was 0.02, based on prior research indicating subtle impacts of leader

communication and justice perceptions on employee attitudes (Men, 2015; Qi et al., 2023). Given the subtlety of these effects, particularly within short-term experimental manipulations, adopting this conservative estimate enhances statistical rigor and prevents overestimating practical significance. A power of 0.8 has been chosen, which is a conventional standard that can strike a balance between a higher likelihood of detecting an effect and the practicality of the study design (Green, 1991). Based on the selected measures, an a priori power analysis was conducted using R, which indicated a required sample size of 609 participants to ensure sufficient statistical power. After excluding participants who failed attention checks, the final analytic sample consisted of $N = 600$ ($M_{age} = 35.06$, $SD = 11.05$), with 48.7% identifying as female and 50.8% as male. Descriptive information on the covariates is provided in Table 3 (Appendix).

Statistical Analysis

To examine the hypothesized relationships, a series of structural equation models (SEMs) were estimated, enabling a theoretically grounded and statistically rigorous test of both direct and indirect pathways underlying employee voice behavior. This modeling approach provides a comprehensive framework for capturing the interplay between perceived justice, psychological safety, and voice, while accounting for conditional and mediating effects (Zyphur et al., 2023). For theoretical clarity and analytic precision, the dataset was stratified into two composite experimental conditions: a supportive communication climate, defined by high levels of interpersonal and informational justice combined with transparency about personal setbacks (hereafter “High condition”, and an unsupportive communication climate, marked by low justice and achievement-oriented transparency (hereafter “Low condition”). These groupings reflect distinct leadership communication profiles and allow for a focused comparison of their psychological and behavioral consequences (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Norman et al., 2010).

Separate SEMs were estimated for each condition, following a stepwise procedure aligning with best latent variable modeling practices (Kline, 2015; Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). The baseline models tested the direct effects of the manipulated justice and transparency variables on psychological safety and employee voice. Subsequent models introduced demographic and dispositional covariates to assess the robustness of these effects. Interaction terms between justice dimensions and framing were then added to test whether the effects of interpersonal or informational justice were contingent upon how transparency was framed. Finally, mediation models were estimated to examine whether psychological safety served as the key psychological mechanism linking CEO communication to voice behavior. This sequential modeling approach ensured conceptual coherence while allowing for a nuanced analysis of the hypothesized main, interaction, and mediation effects.

Covariates and Missing Data Handling

To control for potential confounding influences, all demographic and organizational characteristics were included as covariates using dummy coding. The reference categories were defined as male (gender), White (ethnicity), bachelor's degree (education), five or more years of tenure, formal leadership responsibility, and private sector employment. Age was entered as a continuous predictor. Dummy variables were included only for categories with sufficient sample sizes, and "prefer not to say" or missing responses were treated as missing. All models used full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation to retain cases with partially missing data (Kline, 2015; Zyphur et al., 2023). This approach ensures coefficient interpretability while minimizing multicollinearity and model convergence issues.

Randomization and Manipulation Check

Randomization success was assessed using balance tests across experimental groups. No significant differences were observed across conditions in age, gender, ethnicity, education,

tenure, leadership responsibility, or organizational type (all p s > .05), indicating effective random assignment and demographic balance (Table 4, Appendix).

Manipulation checks confirmed successful operationalization of the experimental variables:

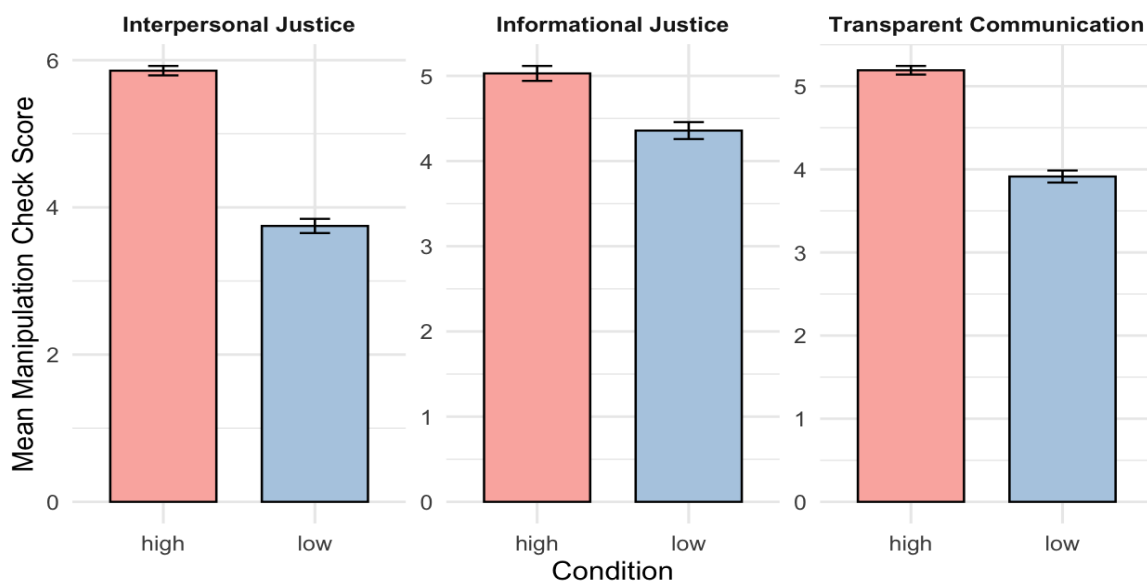
Interpersonal Justice: Participants in the high condition perceived significantly greater interpersonal justice ($M = 5.86$) than those in the low condition ($M = 3.75$), $t(524) = 18.18$, $p < .001$.

Informational Justice: Participants in the high condition reported higher informational justice ($M = 5.03$) compared to the low condition ($M = 4.36$), $t(587) = 5.06$, $p < .001$.

Transparency Framing: Participants in the failure framing condition perceived higher transparency ($M = 5.19$) than those in the achievement framing condition ($M = 3.91$), $t(545) = -14.34$, $p < .001$.

Manipulation check results are visualized in Figure 1

Figure 1: Manipulation Check



Scale Reliability, Construct Validity, and Model Fit.

To assess the reliability of all multi-item constructs, confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and reliability diagnostics were conducted. All scales demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency: *Psychological Safety*: $\alpha = .82$, *Employee Voice*: $\alpha = .93$, *Proactive Personality*: $\alpha = .92$. Average inter-item correlations fell within recommended thresholds. Alternative reliability indices confirmed the internal consistency of all constructs.

Model fit was evaluated across the four SEM specifications in each condition. In both High and Low Justice groups, the baseline (main effects) models yielded acceptable CFI values (CFI = 0.902), but elevated RMSEA values (0.116), suggesting potential misspecification. However, given the limited number of paths and low degrees of freedom in these models, such inflation is not uncommon and does not indicate poor model quality (Kline, 2015). Notably, adding theoretically justified covariates and interaction terms substantially improved model fit. In the final interaction and mediation models, RMSEA values dropped to 0.051 and SRMR remained consistently low (≤ 0.054), indicating good approximation of the observed data. Across all model iterations, parameter estimates remained stable, model convergence was achieved without warnings, and residual variances were within acceptable bounds. Taken together, these results support the structural integrity of the models and confirm that the specified pathways provide a valid and interpretable representation of the hypothesized relationships. Model fit indices are reported in Table 5 (Appendix).

Main Effects Model

To test Hypothesis 1a-1c, two structural equation models were estimated to assess the direct effects of CEO communication dimensions of interpersonal justice, informational justice, and

framing on psychological safety and employee voice, analyzed separately for the High and Low Justice conditions.

In the High Justice condition, interpersonal justice had a strong positive effect on psychological safety ($b = 1.214$, $SE = 0.144$, $\beta = 0.512$, $p < .001$), supporting H1a. Neither informational justice nor failure framing showed significant main effects ($ps > .05$), providing no support for H1b or H1c. Regarding employee voice, psychological safety emerged as a robust positive predictor ($b = 1.149$, $SE = 0.096$, $\beta = 0.839$, $p < .001$), while the direct paths from communication variables were non-significant. These results suggest that interpersonal justice enhances perceived psychological safety, which in turn promotes voice behavior. Complete results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Main Effects (High Justice Model) Path Coefficients

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std. B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_high	1.214	0.144	8.41	< .001	0.512	***
PS	informational_high	0.082	0.092	0.90	0.371	0.035	
PS	framing_failure	0.101	0.093	1.09	0.274	0.043	
EV	interpersonal_high	-0.147	0.137	-1.07	0.284	-0.045	
EV	informational_high	-0.086	0.095	-0.91	0.365	-0.026	
EV	framing_failure	-0.147	0.096	-1.53	0.125	-0.045	
EV	PS	1.149	0.096	12.02	< .001	0.839	***

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std. B = standardized beta coefficient. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The pattern was mirrored in the Low Justice condition. Exposure to low interpersonal justice significantly reduced psychological safety ($b = -1.214$, $SE = 0.144$, $\beta = -0.512$, $p < .001$),

whereas informational justice and achievement framing did not yield significant effects. Again, psychological safety strongly predicted employee voice ($b = 1.149$, $SE = .0096$, $\beta = 0.839$, $p < .001$), and no direct effects of the manipulated communication dimensions on voice were observed. Complete results can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Main Effects (Low Justice Model) Path Coefficients

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_low	-1.214	0.144	-8.41	< .001	-0.512	***
PS	informational_low	-0.082	0.092	-0.90	0.370	-0.035	
PS	framing_achievement	-0.101	0.093	-1.09	0.274	-0.043	
EV	interpersonal_low	0.147	0.137	1.07	0.284	0.045	
EV	informational_low	0.086	0.095	0.91	0.365	0.026	
EV	framing_achievement	0.147	0.096	1.53	0.125	0.045	
EV	PS	1.149	0.096	12.02	< .001	0.839	***

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Together, these results support Hypothesis 1a: interpersonal justice plays a central role in shaping psychological safety during organizational change, which in turn facilitates voice behavior. Informational justice and transparency framing did not show main effects at this stage, though they are examined in subsequent models.

Covariate model

To examine the robustness of the main effects and account for potential confounding influences, covariate-adjusted SEMs were estimated for both the High and Low Justice conditions. These models included proactive personality, age, and all categorical demographic and organizational control variables.

Across both conditions, the main path from interpersonal justice to psychological safety remained strong and significant ($b = \pm 1.237$, $SE = 0.155$, $\beta = \pm 0.506$, $p < .001$), indicating that

the positive effect of fair interpersonal treatment is robust to individual and contextual factors, reinforcing H1a. Appendix Table 6 and Table 7 report complete results for high and low justice conditions, respectively.

In contrast to the main effects models, however, failure framing emerged as a small but significant predictor of employee voice: participants exposed to failure framing (High Justice condition) reported lower voice intentions compared to those exposed to achievement framing ($b = -0.211$, $SE = 0.095$, $\beta = -0.066$, $p = 0.027$), while the reverse pattern held in the Low Justice condition ($b = 0.211$, $SE = 0.095$, $\beta = 0.066$, $p = 0.027$). This finding complicates the expectations outlined in Hypothesis 1c by indicating that the effect of transparency about personal setbacks (i.e., failure framing) on employee voice may be contingent on additional contextual factors. While no interaction was explicitly modeled here, this reversal in effects across justice conditions suggests that the influence of framing may be contingent on the surrounding justice climate – a proposition explored more directly in the interaction model.

Informational justice did not significantly predict either psychological safety or voice behavior in any model, providing no support for Hypothesis 1b.

Proactive personality consistently predicted higher voice behavior ($b = 0.661$, $SE = 0.092$, $\beta = 0.272$, $p < .001$) across conditions, reinforcing its role as a stable individual-level antecedent of employee expression.

Model fit stayed acceptable (CFI = 0.892, TLI = 0.879, RMSEA = 0.051, 90% CI [0.048, 0.055] SRMR = 0.054), and the inclusion of covariates did not alter the pattern of primary relationships observed in the simpler model. The strong positive effect of psychological safety on employee voice also persisted.

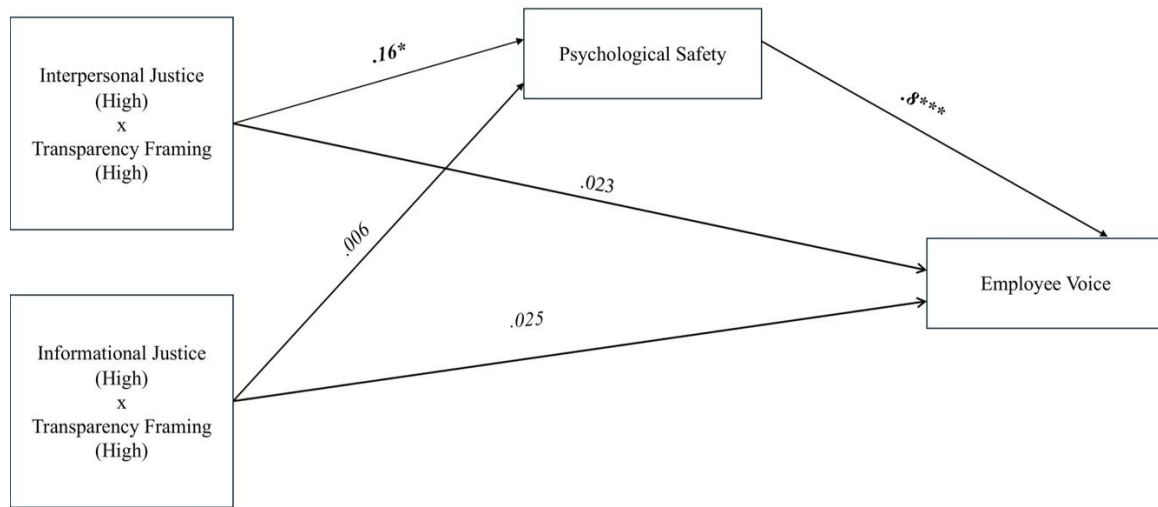
Interaction Model

To assess whether the impact of CEO communication on psychological safety depends on how transparency is framed, as proposed in Hypothesis 2, interaction models were estimated

separately for the High and Low Justice conditions. In the High Justice condition, a significant interaction between interpersonal justice and failure framing predicted psychological safety ($b = 0.455$, $SE = 0.196$, $\beta = 0.160$, $p = .020$), supporting H2a. This indicates that the positive relationship between interpersonal justice and psychological safety became stronger when transparency was framed around personal setbacks. No other interaction terms, including those involving informational justice, reached significance (all $ps > .05$), providing no support for H2b.

The same interaction between interpersonal justice and framing was also significant in the Low Justice condition ($b = 0.455$, $SE = 0.196$, $\beta = 0.163$, $p = .020$). Additionally, a significant main effect of achievement framing on psychological safety was observed ($b = -0.319$, $SE = 0.158$, $\beta = -0.130$, $p = .044$), indicating that employees exposed to achievement-focused communication reported lower psychological safety overall. While the interaction coefficient remained positive, this effect unfolded on a different baseline: under conditions of low interpersonal justice, achievement framing further reduced already low levels of psychological safety. No significant interaction effects emerged for employee voice in either justice condition (all $ps > .05$), in line with the theorized indirect pathway via psychological safety. Complete results can be found in Table 8 for the high justice conditions and Table 9 for low justice conditions in the Appendix.

Figure 2: Interactional Model (High Condition)



Note: Standardizes Coefficients are shown. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

To probe these findings further, simple slopes analyses were conducted. As shown in Figure 2, when CEOs framed their communication around failure, the effect of interpersonal justice on psychological safety was significantly stronger ($b = 0.788$, $SE = 0.118$, $\beta = 0.265$, $p < .001$) than under achievement framing ($b = 0.509$, $SE = 0.100$, $\beta = 0.390$, $p < .001$). This supports the interpretation that failure framing enhances the relational impact of interpersonal justice, whereas achievement framing amplifies it.

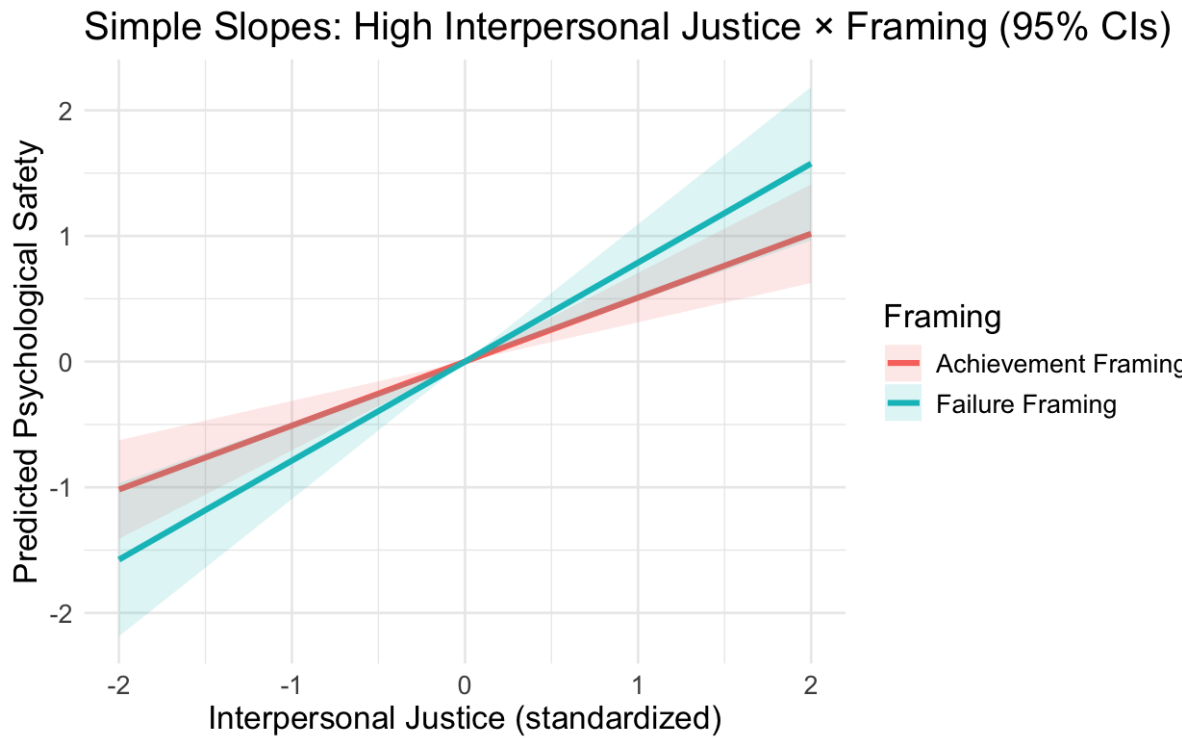


Figure 3: Interaction between interpersonal justice and framing on psychological safety (High Justice condition).

A parallel pattern emerged in the Low Justice condition (Figure 4) the predicted level of psychological safety was lower under low interpersonal justice and achievement framing ($b = -1.391$, $SE = 0.215$, $\beta = -0.571$, $p < .001$) compared to failure framing ($b = -0.968$, $SE = 0.186$, $\beta = -0.419$, $p < .001$), reinforcing the idea that achievement-focused messaging intensifies negative relational dynamics under conditions of low fairness.

Taken together, these findings offer support for H2a, demonstrating that interpersonal justice interacts with framing to shape perceptions of psychological safety. In contrast, H2b was not supported, as the interaction between informational justice and framing was not significant. These results extend prior research by identifying the framing of leader transparency as a situational amplifier or buffer of interpersonal fairness effects thereby highlighting its relevance for psychological safety in the context of organizational change.

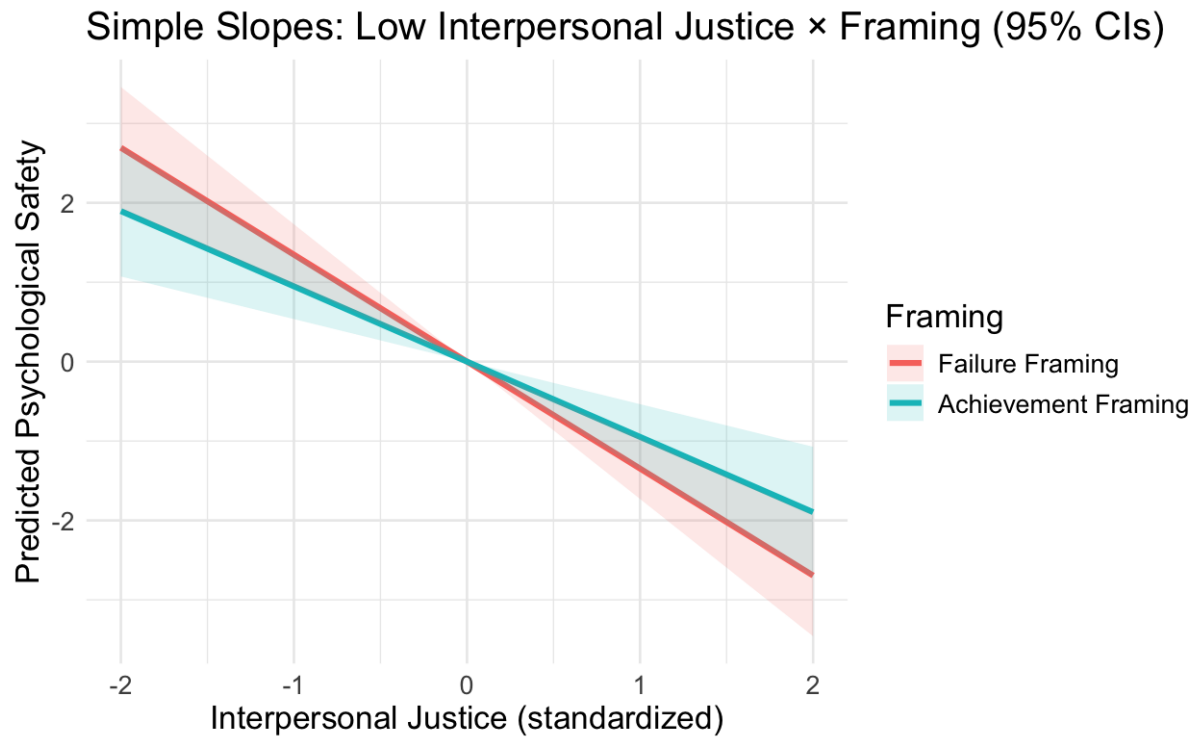


Figure 4: Interaction between interpersonal justice and framing on psychological safety (Low Justice condition).

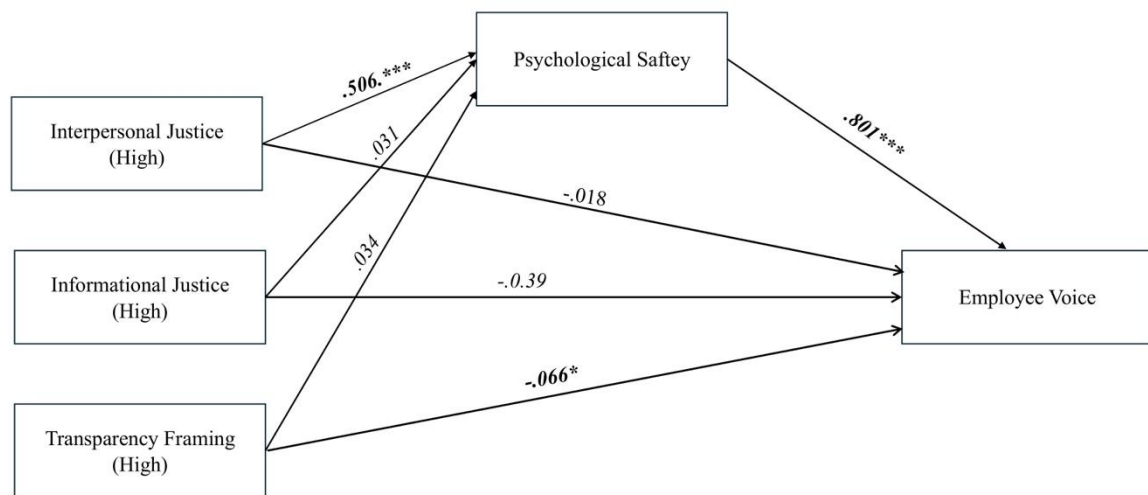
Mediation Model

To test H3a-H3c, which posit that psychological safety mediates the effect of CEO communication on employee voice, mediation models were estimated separately for the High and Low Justice conditions. In both models, psychological safety significantly predicted employee voice (High: $b = 1.040$, $SE = 0.091$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .801$; Low: $b = 1.040$, $SE = 0.091$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .801$), confirming its robust role as a proximal antecedent of voice behavior.

In the High Justice condition, interpersonal justice exerted a strong positive effect on psychological safety ($b = 1.237$, $SE = 0.155$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .506$) but did not directly predict employee voice ($b = -0.057$, $SE = 0.137$, $p = .676$, $\beta = -.018$). Informational justice and failure framing were unrelated to psychological safety and voice (all $ps > .05$), except for a small negative effect of failure framing on employee voice ($b = -0.211$, $SE = 0.095$, $p = .027$, $\beta = -.066$). These results indicate full mediation of interpersonal justice effects via psychological safety, thereby supporting H3a.

In the Low Justice condition, the same mediation pattern emerged in the inverse direction: low interpersonal justice significantly reduced psychological safety ($b = -1.237$, $SE = 0.155$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.506$), which in turn positively predicted employee voice ($b = 1.040$, $SE = 0.091$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .801$). Again, no direct effects of interpersonal or informational justice on voice were observed, and framing showed only a weak direct association ($b = 0.211$, $SE = 0.095$, $p = .027$, $\beta = .066$). The complete results can again be found in Table 10 for the high justice model and Table 11 for the low justice model.

Figure 5: Mediation Model (High Condition)



Note: Standardized Coefficients are shown. $*** p < .001$, $** p < .01$, $* p < .05$.

Taken together, these results provide robust support for H3a, showing that the effect of interpersonal justice on voice behavior is fully mediated by psychological safety. In contrast, H3b was not supported, as informational justice showed no meaningful association with psychological safety or voice in either condition. H3c was also not supported, as failure framing did not enhance psychological safety and was instead directly associated with lower (in High Justice) or higher (in Low Justice) voice intentions, contrary to expectations. These findings

reinforce the central role of relational justice in fostering a communicative climate conducive to employee voice, with psychological safety emerging as the key explanatory mechanism.

Across all models, interpersonal justice consistently predicted psychological safety and indirectly enhanced employee voice, supporting H1a, H2a, and H3a. In contrast, informational justice and transparency framing did not yield consistent direct or indirect effects, providing no support for H1b, H1c, H2b, or H3b–H3c, although framing effects appeared to vary depending on the surrounding justice context. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the theoretical interpretation and practical implications discussed in the following section.

Discussion

This thesis investigated how the different dimensions of CEO Communication during organizational change, specifically interpersonal, informational justice and transparent leadership, specifically openness about personal setbacks, influence employees' perception of psychological safety and their propensity to engage in voice behavior.

One of the most compelling and novel contributions of this study is the finding that transparent communication about personal setbacks significantly enhances psychological safety in contexts of high interpersonal justice. When CEOs openly admitted past mistakes, the positive effect of interpersonal justice on psychological safety was amplified. This backs emerging theories on authentic leadership (Lemoine et al., 2019), which argue that leader self-disclosure strengthens relational trust by reducing perceived power asymmetries and signaling a norm of openness (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Anchored in Social Exchange Theory (SET), this finding suggests that admissions of personal setbacks can serve as cues that upward communication will be met with understanding rather than punishment (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

In high interpersonal justice contexts, transparency about personal setbacks bolstered employees' sense of psychological safety beyond the influence of justice alone. This effect was

especially pronounced during organizational change, where transparent communication signals legitimacy, reduces ambiguity, enhancing the perceived legitimacy and authenticity of leadership communication (Elving, 2005; Luo et al., 2016;). Candid admissions of personal mistakes and vulnerabilities during change processes can thus help mitigate employee fears, strengthen identification with leadership, and maintain organizational cohesion and morale (Klendauer & Deller, 2009).

At the same time, the analysis revealed that when interpersonal justice was low, achievement-oriented communication, emphasizing personal success, had a buffering effect on psychological safety. In these unsupportive climates, confident messaging appeared to restore a perception of stability and leadership competence, partially compensating the absence of relational warmth. This pattern aligns with political and crisis communication literature, where authoritative framing can reassure audiences in the face of uncertainty (Hirsch, 2022; Van Zoonen & Van der Meer, 2015). While not hypothesized, this dynamic interaction suggests that in contexts of perceived injustice, competence signaling may partially, and perhaps only temporarily compensate for a lack of empathy.

Importantly, a small but significant negative direct effect of transparency about personal setbacks on employee voice was observed in the covariate-adjusted model. At first glance, this may appear to contradict the overall positive role of transparent leadership. However, this finding is theoretically consistent with the broader mediation model: transparency enhances psychological safety, which in turn facilitates employee voice, but the direct path may become attenuated when transparency is not strategically embedded in a coherent narrative of resilience and competence (Jiang et al., 2022). Leaders who disclose personal failures without articulating lessons learned or communicating a forward-looking plan may inadvertently signal uncertainty or a lack of strategic direction. This can elicit skepticism or anxiety among employees,

particularly during organizational change, when expectations for stable and competent leadership are heightened (Elving, 2008; Lou et al., 2016).

Such effects are likely amplified among employees with high self-esteem based on others' approval who may perceive excessive vulnerability from senior leaders as destabilizing rather than empowering (Jiang et al., 2022). Thus, while the admission of setbacks may enhance authenticity and psychological closeness, its success depends critically on the way it is framed and situated. Effective leadership communication must therefore balance openness and vulnerability with competence signaling and future orientation. Realistic messaging that acknowledges challenges, while simultaneously affirming the organization's ability to adapt, is more likely to sustain trust and psychological safety (Choi et al., 2024; Men, 2015). This nuance does not undermine the overall beneficial effects of transparent leadership; rather, it reinforces the need for holistic, carefully structured communication strategies that integrate emotional resonance with strategic reassurance, particularly during periods of organizational transformation.

Interpersonal justice emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of psychological safety and employee voice across all models, reaffirming its central role in fostering communicative risk-taking (Bies & Sharpio, 1988; Edmondson, 1999; Liang et al., 2012). More critically, the interaction model revealed that the influence of interpersonal justice is not static, it is enhanced by leaders' willingness to discuss personal setbacks and contextually reinforced by the framing of their communication. This extends existing literature by illustrating that fairness perceptions are co-constructed not only through interpersonal treatment, but also through the interpretive framing of leaders' openness.

Defying expectations, informational justice had no significant effect on psychological safety or employee voice. This finding contributes to ongoing debates about the relative salience of interactional justice dimensions. While informational justice is often theorized as co-equal to

interpersonal justice (Colquitt et al., 2001), recent scholarship suggests that emotional and relational cues, especially under conditions of change and uncertainty, carry more psychological weight than the adequacy of explanations (Frazier et al., 2017). This may be particularly true in high-hierarchy, high-uncertainty contexts such as CEO-led change, where relational signals are rare but symbolically potent. This calls for a reconsideration of when and how informational justice becomes salient. It is possible that informational cues are more impactful when procedural clarity is low, or when decisions involve layoffs or resource redistribution. In the current study's context, emotionally charged interpersonal signals appeared to dominate cognitive appraisals. Additionally, employees may prioritize the manner in which messages are delivered, through empathy, dignity, and respect, over the content of the messages during highly emotional change scenarios.

Confirming prior research, this study highlights psychological safety as the primary mechanism linking CEO communication to employee voice. Notably, except for one instance where achievement framing directly and positively impacted employee voice, no other direct effects of the communication variables were significant, emphasizing the critical mediating role of psychological safety. This finding not only replicates prior research (Liang et al., 2012; Detert & Burris, 2007) but also extends it by integrating transparency framing into a justice-based framework.

Taken together, the findings provide a clear answer to the central research questions: *How do the two dimensions of interactional justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice, as well as transparent leadership communication, influence employees' psychological safety and their willingness to engage in voice behaviors during organizational change?*

How do these communicative signals interact to shape employees' perceptions of safety and openness to engage in voice behaviors?

Interpersonal justice emerged as the most influential predictor of psychological safety and, through it, employee voice. Crucially, its impact was not uniform but contingent on how leaders framed their transparency. Communicating personal setbacks enhanced fairness perceptions when accompanied by respectful treatment, while achievement-oriented messages appeared to mitigate the effects of low interpersonal justice. In contrast, informational justice played a negligible role in this context, suggesting that relational cues outweigh informational adequacy during emotionally charged change processes. These patterns underscore the symbolic potency of CEO communication and reinforce the importance of leader message framing in shaping employees' openness, trust, and willingness to speak up during organizational transformation.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This thesis advances theoretical understanding at the intersection of leadership communication, organizational justice, and psychological safety by illustrating how the perceived fairness and framing of CEO communication shape relational climates conducive to voice behaviors. Framed through Social Exchange Theory, the findings suggest that employees reciprocate respectful and transparent leadership with greater voice engagement, particularly when such communication signals relational fairness. (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958),

Importantly, the study offers conceptual refinement to organizational justice theory, particularly, interactional justice by disentangling its two subdimensions. Although often treated as a unified construct (Colquitt et al., 2001), this study highlights the primacy of interpersonal justice, respect, dignity, and empathy, as the central driver of psychological safety. (Bies, 2005; Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Moreover, the study contributes to scholarship on authentic and transparent leadership by showing that CEO transparency about personal setbacks, when combined with interpersonal fairness, amplifies perceptions of psychological safety. This finding aligns with research suggesting that self-disclosure enhances leader credibility and signals trustworthiness (Jiang et

al., 2022; Lemoine et al., 2019). However, the identified boundary conditions also refine the literature: transparent communication is not a panacea, but rather a contingent practice whose relational impact depends on the surrounding justice climate.

For organizational leaders, especially CEOs navigating periods of transformation, these findings carry several actionable implications. Interpersonal justice should be treated as a core competency in executive communication. Training programs and internal messaging strategies should emphasize respectful, inclusive, and empathetic communication, particularly in high stakes change contexts. This is not merely a matter of rhetorical style, but a foundation for cultivating psychological safety, a prerequisite for employee voice and adaptive behavior.

Leader vulnerability can be powerful, but only when paired with relational fairness and forward-looking reassurance. Vulnerability, when paired with relational fairness, enhances authenticity and encourages upward communication. However, if framed poorly or delivered without forward-looking reassurance, it may raise doubts about leader competence or organizational stability (Lou et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2022). Thus, transparent messaging should be complemented by narratives of resilience and strategic direction to prevent unintended reputational risks.

This study also challenges the common managerial intuition that more information equals more trust. In this case, informational justice had limited effects. This suggests that in emotionally charged contexts, the manner of communication may be more important than its content. Communication professionals and change leaders should therefore craft messages that align both content and tone with relational expectations, striving for congruence between what is communicated and how people are treated.

CEO communication carries symbolic weight far beyond its informational content, shaping perceptions of trust, fairness, and legitimacy across the organization. Organizations should thus

view leadership communication not only as a functional tool, but as a relational act with lasting consequences for employee engagement, trust, and change acceptance.

Limitations and future research

While this thesis offers important insights into the relational dynamics of CEO communication during organizational change, several limitations must be acknowledged that open fruitful avenues for future research.

The vignette method strengthens causal inference, yet it limits ecological validity. Because participants evaluated hypothetical scenarios, future research should examine whether these effects replicate in real-world settings. (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Such designs would allow for assessing whether the observed effects of interpersonal justice and transparency framing persist over time and in the presence of organizational constraints or competing priorities.

The study's manipulation of transparency was restricted to a framing contrast, emphasizing either personal setbacks or personal achievements. While this operationalization aligns with prior research on leader vulnerability (Lemoine et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2023), it captures only one dimension of transparency. Future research should examine additional facets such as consistency over time, the expression of forward-looking vision, or emotional tone. These aspects may moderate the relational impact of leader self-disclosure, particularly in ambiguous or emotionally charged settings. The lack of effects for informational justice invites further scrutiny into its emotional salience and contextual activation.

These findings are based on CEO-level communication, raising questions about their transferability to mid-level or team leadership contexts. The symbolic weight and status of CEOs may magnify the effects of interpersonal justice and transparency, as their communication is often viewed as indicative of broader organizational values (Men, 2015). Future research should explore whether similar patterns emerge for middle managers or team leaders, who may have more frequent but less symbolically loaded interactions with employees.

In addition, the sample composition and recruitment method introduce further considerations. Participants were recruited via a US-based online panel provider, which, while offering a demographically diverse and randomized sample, may limit generalizability to other national or cultural contexts. Social norms regarding leadership behavior, transparency, and fairness perceptions can differ significantly across countries (Hofstede, 2001), suggesting that replications in other cultural contexts are needed to test the cross-cultural robustness of these findings. Moreover, the sample was skewed toward individuals with relatively high educational attainment (the majority holding at least a bachelor's degree) and a large proportion reported holding leadership responsibilities themselves. While balance tests indicated successful randomization across experimental conditions, this demographic profile may reflect heightened sensitivity to leadership communication or familiarity with organizational dynamics not shared by all employee groups. Future studies should seek to replicate the design in broader and more heterogeneous populations, including frontline employees or those with lower organizational authority, to better assess how generalizable these relational effects are across workforce segments.

Taken together, these directions underscore the importance of continuing to investigate the nuanced interplay between justice, transparency, and psychological safety, not as static constructs, but as context-sensitive processes that unfold in interaction with situational, individual, and cultural factors.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine how the interpersonal and informational dimensions of interactional justice, alongside leader transparency, shape employees' psychological safety and their willingness to speak up during organizational change. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and contemporary leadership communication research, the findings offer compelling

insights. Chief among these is the notion that how fairness is communicated can be just as important as its actual presence.

Above all, this study affirms the central role of interpersonal justice as a psychological anchor during times of organizational uncertainty. Respectful, empathetic treatment by leaders consistently fosters psychological safety and enables employee voice, underscoring that fair treatment is not an abstract ideal, but a lived and relational experience. Moreover, the interaction between fairness and transparency revealed that leaders' admissions of personal setbacks can significantly amplify the impact of justice, provided they are framed with authenticity and accompanied by signals of competence.

At the same time, the findings illuminate the limitations of informational justice and challenge the notion that more detail automatically engenders trust. In emotionally charged contexts, it is not merely what leaders say but how they make employees feel that determines whether employees will speak up or remain silent. As this study shows, employee voice is not just a behavioral outcome; it is a communicative risk negotiated through relational cues.

In sum, this thesis advances a more dynamic and context-sensitive understanding of justice-based leadership communication. It calls both researchers and practitioners to move beyond formulaic approaches and attend to the emotional, symbolic, and interpersonal dimensions of organizational life. By demonstrating how fairness, vulnerability, and strategic framing collectively shape employees' perceptions of psychological safety and willingness to express themselves, this work contributes to a growing call for leadership that is not only competent, but also courageously human.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how distinct dimensions of CEO communication during organizational change shape employees' perceptions of psychological safety and their willingness to engage in voice behavior. Anchored in Social Exchange Theory and organizational justice research, the study investigates the effects of interpersonal justice, informational justice, and transparency framing, specifically, the disclosure of personal setbacks versus achievements. A **3**-factorial vignette experiment (N = 600) was conducted with employed adults in the United States. Structural equation modeling revealed that interpersonal justice substantially increased psychological safety, which in turn strongly predicted employee voice. Moreover, failure framing intensified the positive effect of interpersonal justice on psychological safety, while informational justice demonstrated no significant effects across models. These findings indicate that relational fairness and perceived authenticity in CEO communication exert greater influence on psychological safety than the mere adequacy of information. This thesis advances a more differentiated understanding of interactional justice and transparent leadership, highlighting the symbolic and affective power of CEO communication in high-stakes organizational environments.

Abstract German

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht, wie verschiedene Dimensionen der CEO-Kommunikation während organisationaler Veränderungsprozesse die Wahrnehmung psychologischer Sicherheit und die Bereitschaft der Mitarbeitenden zu Voice-Verhalten beeinflussen. Verankert in der Social Exchange Theory und der Forschung zur organisationalen Gerechtigkeit analysiert die Studie die Effekte von interpersonaler Gerechtigkeit, informationeller Gerechtigkeit sowie von Transparenz-Framing, konkret der Offenlegung persönlicher Rückschläge versus Erfolge. Ein dreifaktorielles Vignettenexperiment ($N = 600$) wurde mit berufstätigen Erwachsenen in den USA durchgeführt. Für die Analyse wurden Strukturgleichungsmodelle gerechnet, die ergaben, dass interpersonale Gerechtigkeit die psychologische Sicherheit substanziell erhöhte, welche wiederum das Voice-Verhalten stark vorhersagte. Zudem verstärkte das Framing persönlicher Rückschläge den positiven Effekt interpersonaler Gerechtigkeit auf psychologische Sicherheit, während informationelle Gerechtigkeit in keinem Modell signifikante Effekte zeigte. Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen, dass relationale Fairness und wahrgenommene Authentizität in der CEO-Kommunikation einen stärkeren Einfluss auf psychologische Sicherheit ausüben als die reine Informationsadäquatheit. Die Arbeit trägt zu einem differenzierten Verständnis von Interaktionsgerechtigkeit **und** transparenter Führung bei und betont die symbolische und affektive Wirkung von CEO-Kommunikation in hochdynamischen organisationalen Kontexten.

Appendix

AI-disclosure

Tool	Function	Used in Chapters
ChatGPT	Wording + sentence structure	Full report
NotebookLM	Paper Collection	Full report
Research Rabbit	Paper Collection	Full report
DeepL Translate DeepL Write	Translation of sample	Full report

Tables

Table 3, Sample Characteristics

Group	Variable	N	Percent
Age	Age (years): Mean (SD)	35.06 (11.04)	
Gender	Female	292	48.7
Gender	Male	305	50.8
Gender	Other gender	2	0.3
Ethnicity	White	352	58.7
Ethnicity	Black	194	32.3
Ethnicity	Hispanic	18	3
Ethnicity	Asian	7	1.2
Ethnicity	Indigenous	9	1.5
Ethnicity	Pacific Islander	1	0.2
Ethnicity	Mixed/Other	4	0.7
Education	High school	61	10.2
Education	Bachelor's	287	47.8
Education	Master's	192	32

Group	Variable	N	Percent
Education	PhD	57	9.5
Education	Less than HS	2	0.3
Tenure	Tenure <6m	13	2.2
Tenure	Tenure 6m-1y	26	4.3
Tenure	Tenure 1-2y	103	17.2
Tenure	Tenure 3-5y	198	33
Tenure	Tenure 5y+	255	42.5
Leadership	Leadership role	494	82.3
Leadership	No leadership	98	16.3
Organization Type	Private	391	65.2
Organization Type	Public	153	25.5
Organization Type	NPO	20	3.3
Organization Type	Academic	16	2.7
Organization Type	Other	9	1.5

Note. N = Number of respondents. Percentages based on valid cases. Age presented as Mean (SD). N total = 600

Table 3: Sample Characteristics

Table 4, Balance Test Table: Comparison of Demographic Variables Across Experimental Groups

Variable	Test	df	Statistic	p_value	Significant
Age	ANOVA	7, 591	F = 1.10	0.361	No
Gender (Female vs. Male)	Chi-squared	7	2.17	0.950	No
Ethnicity (Black vs. White)	Chi-squared	7	4.52	0.718	No
Education (High School $\leq$ vs. BA)	Chi-squared	7	9.44	0.222	No
Education (MA/PhD vs. BA)	Chi-squared	7	7.35	0.393	No
Leadership (No vs. Yes)	Chi-squared	7	12.41	0.088	No
Org. Type (Non-private vs. Private)	Chi-squared	7	9.04	0.250	No

Variable	Test	df	Statistic	p_value	Significant
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Note. p values are two-sided. No demographic covariate differed significantly between conditions.

Table 4: Balance Test

Table 5 Model Fit Indices for Structural Equation Models

Model	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMSEA.90..CI	SRMR
Main Effects (High Justice)	0.902	0.873	0.116	[0.107, 0.125]	0.048
Main Effects + Covariates (High Justice)	0.892	0.879	0.051	[0.048, 0.055]	0.054
Interaction Model (High Justice)	0.890	0.877	0.050	[0.046, 0.053]	0.051
Main Effects (Low Justice)	0.902	0.873	0.116	[0.107, 0.125]	0.048
Main Effects + Covariates (Low Justice)	0.892	0.879	0.051	[0.048, 0.055]	0.054
Interactional Model (Low Justice)	0.890	0.877	0.050	[0.046, 0.053]	0.051
Mediation Model (High Justice)	0.892	0.879	0.051	[0.048, 0.055]	0.054
Mediation Model (Low Justice)	0.892	0.879	0.051	[0.048, 0.055]	0.054

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; RMSEA 90% CI = 90% Confidence Interval for RMSEA; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Table 5: Model Fit Indices

Table 6 Main Effects + Covariates (High Justice)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std. B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_high	1.237	0.155	7.99	< .001	0.506	***
PS	informational_high	0.075	0.098	0.77	0.443	0.031	
PS	framing_failure	0.083	0.098	0.84	0.400	0.034	
EV	interpersonal_high	-0.057	0.137	-0.42	0.676	-0.018	
EV	informational_high	-0.125	0.094	-1.33	0.183	-0.039	
EV	framing_failure	-0.211	0.095	-2.22	0.027	-0.066	*
EV	PS	1.040	0.091	11.43	< .001	0.801	***
EV	PROACTIVE	0.661	0.092	7.19	< .001	0.272	***

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std. B	Sig
PS	age	-0.013	0.005	-2.30	0.021	-0.112	*
PS	gender_female	-0.013	0.099	-0.13	0.895	-0.005	
PS	eth_black	-0.039	0.111	-0.35	0.729	-0.015	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.162	0.317	-0.51	0.608	-0.023	
PS	eth_asian	-0.693	0.564	-1.23	0.219	-0.063	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.256	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.263	0.223	-5.66	< .001	-0.043	***
PS	eth_mixed	0.150	0.414	0.36	0.717	0.010	
PS	edu_hs	-0.033	0.183	-0.18	0.858	-0.008	
PS	edu_ma	0.015	0.116	0.13	0.898	0.006	
PS	edu_phd	-0.030	0.164	-0.18	0.857	-0.007	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.646	0.403	-1.60	0.109	-0.076	
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.205	0.249	-0.83	0.409	-0.034	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.163	0.168	-0.97	0.332	-0.051	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.187	0.128	-1.46	0.143	-0.072	
PS	leader_no	-0.056	0.142	-0.39	0.695	-0.017	
PS	org_public	-0.055	0.120	-0.46	0.648	-0.020	
PS	org_npo	0.464	0.306	1.52	0.129	0.069	
PS	org_acad	0.174	0.272	0.64	0.523	0.022	
PS	org_other	0.234	0.344	0.68	0.496	0.021	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.912	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.095	0.13	0.893	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.012	0.103	-0.12	0.905	-0.004	
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.187	0.250	-0.75	0.456	-0.021	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std. B	Sig
EV	eth_asian	0.157	0.344	0.46	0.648	0.011	
EV	eth_indig	-0.115	0.326	-0.35	0.725	-0.009	
EV	eth_pacific	0.557	0.199	2.80	0.005	0.015	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.212	0.343	0.62	0.536	0.011	
EV	edu_hs	0.025	0.214	0.12	0.908	0.005	
EV	edu_ma	-0.086	0.107	-0.80	0.422	-0.025	
EV	edu_phd	-0.124	0.163	-0.76	0.447	-0.023	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.521	0.452	1.15	0.248	0.047	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.087	0.301	-0.29	0.772	-0.011	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.015	0.145	0.10	0.920	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.182	0.115	1.58	0.115	0.054	
EV	leader_no	0.001	0.144	0.01	0.995	0.000	
EV	org_public	0.118	0.118	1.00	0.317	0.033	
EV	org_npo	-0.216	0.271	-0.80	0.426	-0.025	
EV	org_acad	0.147	0.251	0.58	0.559	0.014	
EV	org_other	-0.273	0.356	-0.77	0.443	-0.019	

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std. B = standardized beta coefficient. *p* < .05, **p** < .01, ***p*** < .001.

Table 6: Main Effects + Covariates (High Justice Model)

Table 7 Main Effects + Covariates (Low Justice)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_low	-1.237	0.155	-7.99	< .001	-0.506	***
PS	informational_low	-0.075	0.098	-0.77	0.443	-0.031	
PS	framing_achievement	-0.083	0.098	-0.84	0.400	-0.034	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
EV	interpersonal_low	0.057	0.137	0.42	0.676	0.018	
EV	informational_low	0.125	0.094	1.33	0.183	0.039	
EV	framing_achievement	0.211	0.095	2.22	0.027	0.066	*
EV	PS	1.040	0.091	11.43	< .001	0.801	***
EV	PROACTIVE	0.661	0.092	7.19	< .001	0.272	***
PS	age	-0.013	0.005	-2.30	0.021	-0.112	*
PS	gender_female	-0.013	0.099	-0.13	0.895	-0.005	
PS	eth_black	-0.039	0.111	-0.35	0.729	-0.015	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.162	0.317	-0.51	0.608	-0.023	
PS	eth_asian	-0.693	0.564	-1.23	0.219	-0.063	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.256	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.263	0.223	-5.66	< .001	-0.043	***
PS	eth_mixed	0.150	0.414	0.36	0.717	0.010	
PS	edu_hs	-0.033	0.183	-0.18	0.858	-0.008	
PS	edu_ma	0.015	0.116	0.13	0.898	0.006	
PS	edu_phd	-0.030	0.164	-0.18	0.857	-0.007	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.647	0.403	-1.60	0.109	-0.076	
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.205	0.249	-0.83	0.409	-0.034	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.163	0.168	-0.97	0.332	-0.051	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.187	0.128	-1.46	0.143	-0.072	
PS	leader_no	-0.056	0.142	-0.39	0.695	-0.017	
PS	org_public	-0.055	0.120	-0.46	0.648	-0.020	
PS	org_npo	0.464	0.306	1.52	0.129	0.069	
PS	org_acad	0.174	0.272	0.64	0.523	0.022	
PS	org_other	0.234	0.344	0.68	0.496	0.021	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.912	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.095	0.13	0.893	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.012	0.103	-0.12	0.905	-0.004	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.187	0.250	-0.75	0.456	-0.021	
EV	eth_asian	0.157	0.344	0.46	0.648	0.011	
EV	eth_indig	-0.115	0.326	-0.35	0.725	-0.009	
EV	eth_pacific	0.557	0.199	2.80	0.005	0.015	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.212	0.343	0.62	0.536	0.011	
EV	edu_hs	0.025	0.214	0.12	0.908	0.005	
EV	edu_ma	-0.086	0.107	-0.80	0.422	-0.025	
EV	edu_phd	-0.124	0.163	-0.76	0.446	-0.023	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.521	0.452	1.15	0.249	0.047	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.087	0.301	-0.29	0.772	-0.011	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.015	0.145	0.10	0.920	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.182	0.115	1.58	0.115	0.054	
EV	leader_no	0.001	0.144	0.01	0.995	0.000	
EV	org_public	0.118	0.118	1.00	0.317	0.033	
EV	org_npo	-0.215	0.271	-0.80	0.426	-0.024	
EV	org_acad	0.147	0.251	0.58	0.559	0.014	
EV	org_other	-0.273	0.356	-0.77	0.443	-0.019	

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 7: Main Effects + Covariates (Low Justice Model)

Table 3. Interactional Effects (High Justice Model)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_high	1.101	0.195	5.65	< .001	0.450	***
PS	informational_high	0.159	0.183	0.87	0.386	0.065	
PS	framing_failure	-0.153	0.180	-0.85	0.396	-0.063	
PS	ipj_x_infoj	-0.172	0.198	-0.87	0.383	-0.061	
PS	infoj_x_failure	0.017	0.195	0.09	0.932	0.006	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	ipj_x_failure	0.455	0.196	2.32	0.020	0.160	*
EV	PS	1.038	0.091	11.39	< .001	0.800	***
EV	interpersonal_high	-0.184	0.184	-1.00	0.317	-0.058	
EV	informational_high	-0.251	0.163	-1.54	0.124	-0.079	
EV	framing_failure	-0.298	0.173	-1.72	0.085	-0.094	
EV	ipj_x_infoj	0.167	0.190	0.88	0.379	0.045	
EV	infoj_x_failure	0.091	0.185	0.49	0.621	0.025	
EV	ipj_x_failure	0.085	0.187	0.45	0.649	0.023	
EV	PROACTIVE	0.662	0.092	7.18	< .001	0.272	***
PS	age	-0.012	0.005	-2.22	0.026	-0.108	*
PS	gender_female	-0.004	0.099	-0.04	0.972	-0.001	
PS	eth_black	-0.041	0.111	-0.37	0.714	-0.016	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.176	0.313	-0.56	0.574	-0.025	
PS	eth_asian	-0.792	0.572	-1.39	0.166	-0.072	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.254	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.420	0.237	-6.00	< .001	-0.049	***
PS	eth_mixed	0.241	0.385	0.63	0.532	0.016	
PS	edu_hs	-0.007	0.185	-0.04	0.968	-0.002	
PS	edu_ma	0.018	0.116	0.15	0.878	0.007	
PS	edu_phd	-0.014	0.165	-0.09	0.931	-0.003	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.566	0.407	-1.39	0.164	-0.067	
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.224	0.245	-0.91	0.362	-0.037	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.171	0.168	-1.02	0.310	-0.053	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.184	0.127	-1.44	0.149	-0.070	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	leader_no	-0.028	0.141	-0.20	0.844	-0.008	
PS	org_public	-0.045	0.121	-0.37	0.711	-0.016	
PS	org_npo	0.481	0.297	1.62	0.105	0.071	
PS	org_acad	0.155	0.271	0.57	0.568	0.020	
PS	org_other	0.279	0.340	0.82	0.412	0.025	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.913	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.094	0.14	0.889	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.011	0.103	-0.11	0.913	-0.003	
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.182	0.248	-0.73	0.465	-0.020	
EV	eth_asian	0.138	0.336	0.41	0.681	0.010	
EV	eth_indig	-0.139	0.331	-0.42	0.674	-0.011	
EV	eth_pacific	0.598	0.218	2.75	0.006	0.016	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.189	0.359	0.53	0.598	0.010	
EV	edu_hs	0.017	0.214	0.08	0.936	0.003	
EV	edu_ma	-0.092	0.107	-0.86	0.389	-0.027	
EV	edu_phd	-0.123	0.163	-0.76	0.450	-0.022	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.530	0.447	1.18	0.236	0.048	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.082	0.305	-0.27	0.788	-0.010	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.017	0.145	0.12	0.907	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.186	0.115	1.62	0.106	0.055	
EV	leader_no	0.008	0.143	0.06	0.953	0.002	
EV	org_public	0.113	0.119	0.95	0.340	0.031	
EV	org_npo	-0.219	0.269	-0.81	0.416	-0.025	
EV	org_acad	0.142	0.248	0.57	0.568	0.014	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
EV	org_other	-0.253	0.359	-0.70	0.481	-0.018	

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; *p* < .05, **p** < .01, ***p*** < .001.

Table 8: Interactional Effects (High Justice Model)

Table 6. Interactional Model (Low Justice)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_low	-1.384	0.217	-6.37	< .001	-0.566	***
PS	informational_low	-0.003	0.159	-0.02	0.985	-0.001	
PS	framing_achievement	-0.319	0.158	-2.01	0.044	-0.130	*
PS	ipj_x_infoj_low	-0.172	0.198	-0.87	0.383	-0.061	
PS	infoj_x_achievement	0.017	0.195	0.09	0.931	0.006	
PS	ipj_x_achievement	0.455	0.196	2.32	0.020	0.163	*
EV	PS	1.038	0.091	11.39	< .001	0.800	***
EV	interpersonal_low	-0.068	0.201	-0.34	0.735	-0.021	
EV	informational_low	-0.008	0.155	-0.05	0.960	-0.002	
EV	framing_achievement	0.122	0.159	0.77	0.443	0.038	
EV	ipj_x_infoj_low	0.167	0.190	0.88	0.379	0.045	
EV	infoj_x_achievement	0.091	0.185	0.49	0.621	0.025	
EV	ipj_x_achievement	0.085	0.187	0.45	0.649	0.023	
EV	PROACTIVE	0.662	0.092	7.18	< .001	0.272	***
PS	age	-0.012	0.005	-2.22	0.026	-0.108	*
PS	gender_female	-0.003	0.099	-0.04	0.972	-0.001	
PS	eth_black	-0.041	0.111	-0.37	0.714	-0.016	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.176	0.313	-0.56	0.574	-0.025	
PS	eth_asian	-0.792	0.572	-1.39	0.166	-0.072	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.254	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.420	0.237	-6.00	< .001	-0.049	***

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	eth_mixed	0.241	0.385	0.63	0.531	0.017	
PS	edu_hs	-0.007	0.185	-0.04	0.968	-0.002	
PS	edu_ma	0.018	0.116	0.15	0.878	0.007	
PS	edu_phd	-0.014	0.165	-0.09	0.931	-0.003	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.566	0.407	-1.39	0.164	-0.067	
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.223	0.245	-0.91	0.362	-0.037	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.171	0.168	-1.02	0.310	-0.053	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.184	0.127	-1.44	0.149	-0.070	
PS	leader_no	-0.028	0.141	-0.20	0.844	-0.008	
PS	org_public	-0.045	0.121	-0.37	0.712	-0.016	
PS	org_npo	0.481	0.297	1.62	0.105	0.071	
PS	org_acad	0.155	0.271	0.57	0.568	0.020	
PS	org_other	0.279	0.340	0.82	0.412	0.025	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.912	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.094	0.14	0.889	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.011	0.103	-0.11	0.913	-0.003	
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.182	0.248	-0.73	0.465	-0.020	
EV	eth_asian	0.139	0.336	0.41	0.680	0.010	
EV	eth_indig	-0.139	0.331	-0.42	0.674	-0.011	
EV	eth_pacific	0.598	0.218	2.75	0.006	0.016	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.189	0.359	0.53	0.599	0.010	
EV	edu_hs	0.017	0.214	0.08	0.936	0.003	
EV	edu_ma	-0.092	0.107	-0.86	0.389	-0.027	
EV	edu_phd	-0.123	0.163	-0.76	0.450	-0.022	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.530	0.447	1.18	0.236	0.048	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.082	0.305	-0.27	0.788	-0.010	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.017	0.145	0.12	0.907	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.186	0.115	1.62	0.106	0.055	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
EV	leader_no	0.008	0.143	0.06	0.953	0.002	
EV	org_public	0.113	0.119	0.95	0.341	0.031	
EV	org_npo	-0.219	0.269	-0.81	0.416	-0.025	
EV	org_acad	0.142	0.248	0.57	0.568	0.014	
EV	org_other	-0.253	0.359	-0.70	0.481	-0.018	

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; *p* < .05, **p** < .01, ***p*** < .001.

Table 9: Interactional Effects (Low Justice Model)

Table 10 Mediation Model (High Justice)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_high	1.237	0.155	7.99	< .001	0.506	***
PS	informational_high	0.075	0.098	0.77	0.443	0.031	
PS	framing_failure	0.083	0.098	0.84	0.400	0.034	
EV	PS	1.040	0.091	11.43	< .001	0.801	***
EV	interpersonal_high	-0.057	0.137	-0.42	0.676	-0.018	
EV	informational_high	-0.125	0.094	-1.33	0.183	-0.039	
EV	framing_failure	-0.211	0.095	-2.22	0.027	-0.066	*
EV	PROACTIVE	0.661	0.092	7.19	< .001	0.272	***
PS	age	-0.013	0.005	-2.30	0.021	-0.112	*
PS	gender_female	-0.013	0.099	-0.13	0.895	-0.005	
PS	eth_black	-0.039	0.111	-0.35	0.729	-0.015	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.162	0.317	-0.51	0.608	-0.023	
PS	eth_asian	-0.693	0.564	-1.23	0.219	-0.063	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.256	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.263	0.223	-5.66	< .001	-0.043	***
PS	eth_mixed	0.150	0.414	0.36	0.717	0.010	
PS	edu_hs	-0.033	0.183	-0.18	0.858	-0.008	
PS	edu_ma	0.015	0.116	0.13	0.898	0.006	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	edu_phd	-0.030	0.164	-0.18	0.857	-0.007	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.646	0.403	-1.60	0.109	-0.076	
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.205	0.249	-0.83	0.409	-0.034	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.163	0.168	-0.97	0.332	-0.051	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.187	0.128	-1.46	0.143	-0.072	
PS	leader_no	-0.056	0.142	-0.39	0.695	-0.017	
PS	org_public	-0.055	0.120	-0.46	0.648	-0.020	
PS	org_npo	0.464	0.306	1.52	0.129	0.069	
PS	org_acad	0.174	0.272	0.64	0.523	0.022	
PS	org_other	0.234	0.344	0.68	0.496	0.021	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.912	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.095	0.13	0.893	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.012	0.103	-0.12	0.905	-0.004	
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.187	0.250	-0.75	0.456	-0.021	
EV	eth_asian	0.157	0.344	0.46	0.648	0.011	
EV	eth_indig	-0.115	0.326	-0.35	0.725	-0.009	
EV	eth_pacific	0.557	0.199	2.80	0.005	0.015	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.212	0.343	0.62	0.536	0.011	
EV	edu_hs	0.025	0.214	0.12	0.908	0.005	
EV	edu_ma	-0.086	0.107	-0.80	0.422	-0.025	
EV	edu_phd	-0.124	0.163	-0.76	0.447	-0.023	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.521	0.452	1.15	0.248	0.047	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.087	0.301	-0.29	0.772	-0.011	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.015	0.145	0.10	0.920	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.182	0.115	1.58	0.115	0.054	
EV	leader_no	0.001	0.144	0.01	0.995	0.000	
EV	org_public	0.118	0.118	1.00	0.317	0.033	
EV	org_npo	-0.216	0.271	-0.80	0.426	-0.025	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
EV	org_acad	0.147	0.251	0.58	0.559	0.014	
EV	org_other	-0.273	0.356	-0.77	0.443	-0.019	

Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; *p* < .05, **p** < .01, ***p*** < .001.

Table 10: Mediation Model (High Justice)

Table 8. Mediation Model (Low Justice)

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	interpersonal_low	-1.237	0.155	-7.99	< .001	-0.506	***
PS	informational_low	-0.075	0.098	-0.77	0.443	-0.031	
PS	framing_achievement	-0.083	0.098	-0.84	0.400	-0.034	
EV	PS	1.040	0.091	11.43	< .001	0.801	***
EV	interpersonal_low	0.057	0.137	0.42	0.676	0.018	
EV	informational_low	0.125	0.094	1.33	0.183	0.039	
EV	framing_achievement	0.211	0.095	2.22	0.027	0.066	*
EV	PROACTIVE	0.661	0.092	7.19	< .001	0.272	***
PS	age	-0.013	0.005	-2.30	0.021	-0.112	*
PS	gender_female	-0.013	0.099	-0.13	0.895	-0.005	
PS	eth_black	-0.039	0.111	-0.35	0.729	-0.015	
PS	eth_hispanic	-0.162	0.317	-0.51	0.608	-0.023	
PS	eth_asian	-0.693	0.564	-1.23	0.219	-0.063	
PS	eth_indig	-0.510	0.448	-1.14	0.256	-0.052	
PS	eth_pacific	-1.263	0.223	-5.66	< .001	-0.043	***
PS	eth_mixed	0.150	0.414	0.36	0.717	0.010	
PS	edu_hs	-0.033	0.183	-0.18	0.858	-0.008	
PS	edu_ma	0.015	0.116	0.13	0.898	0.006	
PS	edu_phd	-0.030	0.164	-0.18	0.857	-0.007	
PS	tenure_lt6m	-0.647	0.403	-1.60	0.109	-0.076	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
PS	tenure_6m_1y	-0.205	0.249	-0.83	0.409	-0.034	
PS	tenure_1_2y	-0.163	0.168	-0.97	0.332	-0.051	
PS	tenure_3_5y	-0.187	0.128	-1.46	0.143	-0.072	
PS	leader_no	-0.056	0.142	-0.39	0.695	-0.017	
PS	org_public	-0.055	0.120	-0.46	0.648	-0.020	
PS	org_npo	0.464	0.306	1.52	0.129	0.069	
PS	org_acad	0.174	0.272	0.64	0.523	0.022	
PS	org_other	0.234	0.344	0.68	0.496	0.021	
EV	age	-0.001	0.005	-0.11	0.912	-0.004	
EV	gender_female	0.013	0.095	0.13	0.893	0.004	
EV	eth_black	-0.012	0.103	-0.12	0.905	-0.004	
EV	eth_hispanic	-0.187	0.250	-0.75	0.456	-0.021	
EV	eth_asian	0.157	0.344	0.46	0.648	0.011	
EV	eth_indig	-0.115	0.326	-0.35	0.725	-0.009	
EV	eth_pacific	0.557	0.199	2.80	0.005	0.015	**
EV	eth_mixed	0.212	0.343	0.62	0.536	0.011	
EV	edu_hs	0.025	0.214	0.12	0.908	0.005	
EV	edu_ma	-0.086	0.107	-0.80	0.422	-0.025	
EV	edu_phd	-0.124	0.163	-0.76	0.446	-0.023	
EV	tenure_lt6m	0.521	0.452	1.15	0.249	0.047	
EV	tenure_6m_1y	-0.087	0.301	-0.29	0.772	-0.011	
EV	tenure_1_2y	0.015	0.145	0.10	0.920	0.004	
EV	tenure_3_5y	0.182	0.115	1.58	0.115	0.054	
EV	leader_no	0.001	0.144	0.01	0.995	0.000	
EV	org_public	0.118	0.118	1.00	0.317	0.033	
EV	org_npo	-0.215	0.271	-0.80	0.426	-0.024	
EV	org_acad	0.147	0.251	0.58	0.559	0.014	
EV	org_other	-0.273	0.356	-0.77	0.443	-0.019	

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	z	p	Std.B	Sig
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Note. B = unstandardized estimate; Std.B = standardized beta coefficient; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 11: Mediation Model (Low Justice)

Study Materials

Covariates:

- What gender do you identify with? Male, Female, Other, Prefer not to say
- Please indicate your Ethnicity: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic, Mixed, Prefer not to say
- What is your highest educational qualification? Less than a high school diploma, High school diploma or equivalent, Bachelor's degree or equivalent, Master's degree or equivalent, PhD or Doctorate, Prefer not to say
- Please select your age: 18- 65, Prefer not to say
- How long have you been employed in your current position? Less than 6 months, 6 months to 1 year, 1–3 years, 3–5 years, More than 5 years, Prefer not to say
- Do you have leadership responsibilities? Yes, No, Prefer not to say
- Organization: Which of the following best describes your organization? Private sector, Public sector, Non-profit/NGO, Academic/Research institution, Other, Prefer not to say

Proactive Personality Scale: (Trifiletti et al. 2017):

Answered with a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree

- I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life

- Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change
- Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality
- If I see something I don't like, I fix it
- No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen
- I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition
- I excel at identifying opportunities
- I am always looking for better ways to do things
- If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen
- I can spot a good opportunity long before others can

Outcome Measures Dependent Variables: Answered with a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree

Adapted Psychological Safety Scale (Edmonson, 1999)

- I feel that if I say something inappropriate at the town hall meeting, it will be held against me. (Reversed.)
- I feel that members of this organization can raise problems and difficult issues at the town hall meeting.
- I feel that it is safe to take a risk and express my thoughts at the town hall meeting.
- I feel that it is difficult to ask colleagues for help with questions or concerns I may have about this change. (Reversed)

Adapted Employee Voice Scale (VanDyne & LePine 1998)

- I would make recommendations concerning issues affecting the time reporting system during the town hall meeting.

- I would speak up and encourage others to get involved in issues affecting this change.
- I would communicate my opinions about the time reporting system to others in this organization, even if they disagree with me.
- I would contribute ideas to this organization regarding this change.
- I would keep myself well informed about other issues where my opinion might be useful to this organization.
- I would contribute to further issues affecting the quality of working life in this organization.

Adapted Manipulation Check:

(Colquitt et al., 2001)

Interpersonal Justice Items:

- The CEO has treated me in a polite manner
- The CEO has treated me with dignity
- The CEO has treated me with respect

Informational Justice Items:

- The CEO has been candid in the communication
- The CEO has explained the procedure thoroughly
- The CEO's explanations of the procedures were reasonable
- The CEO has communicated details in a timely manner
- The CEO's speech was tailored to the employees needs

Transparent Communication

- The CEO openly acknowledged personal challenges faced during organizational changes.
- The CEO provided clear and honest explanations about past setbacks.
- The CEO emphasized personal successes without discussing past difficulties.
- The CEO focused solely on achievements, omitting any mention of previous challenges.

Vignettes Independent Variable:

Achievement Framing, High Interpersonal Justice, High Informational Justice

„Over the years, I’ve led several successful transitions. Most notably, we introduced a shift to a digital reporting system, which improved efficiency and satisfaction. This experience provided me with valuable insights into managing change, and I am confident that these will contribute to the success of this transition.

I truly appreciate all your hard work. I understand that change can be unsettling, and I want to make sure you feel heard.

Please don’t hesitate to share any thoughts or concerns. Your input is important to me.

The system will go live next month. You will receive a guide, timeline and access details this week. Training sessions will be held in small groups, and support will be provided as needed.

Our aim is to ensure that you have all the necessary information before any changes are made.“

Achievement Framing, High Interpersonal Justice, Low Informational Justice

„Over the years, I’ve led several successful transitions. Most notably, we introduced a shift to a digital reporting system, which improved efficiency and satisfaction. This experience provided me with valuable insights into managing change, and I am confident that these will contribute to the success of this transition.

I truly appreciate all your hard work. I understand that change can be unsettling, and I want to make sure you feel heard. Please don't hesitate to share any thoughts or concerns. Your input is important to me.

The system will go live soon. We believe it's an improvement. The relevant teams will communicate specifics about how it will function day-to-day later. There's no need to be concerned at this point."

Achievement Framing, Low Interpersonal Justice, High Informational Justice

„Over the years, I've led several successful transitions. Most notably, we introduced a shift to a digital reporting system, which improved efficiency and satisfaction. This experience provided me with valuable insights into managing change, and I am confident that these will contribute to the success of this transition.

As this is a company-wide change, I'll get straight to the point: The new system is being implemented, and we expect everyone to adjust accordingly. This isn't a topic for individual feedback at this stage, so please focus on aligning with the outlined changes.

The system will go live next month. You will receive a guide, timeline and access details this week. Training sessions will be held in small groups, and support will be provided as needed. Our aim is to ensure that you have all the necessary information before any changes are made."

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Failure Framing, High Interpersonal Justice, High Informational Justice

„In the past, I've overseen changes that didn't go as planned. For example, a digital reporting system that we introduced caused confusion and stress among staff. This experience provided me with valuable insights into managing change, and I believe these will help us to make this transition a success.

I truly appreciate all your hard work. I understand that change can be unsettling, and I want to make sure you feel heard. Please don't hesitate to share any thoughts or concerns. Your input is important to me.

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