Overall justice, perceived organizational support and readiness for change:

The moderating role of perceived organizational competence

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Structured Abstract

Purpose

The objective of this research is to investigate the mechanisms and the conditions under which experiencing organizational justice fosters employees' readiness for change. First, this study tests the mediating role of perceived organizational support between overall justice and readiness for change. Second, it examines whether perceived organizational competence moderates this indirect positive effect.

Design/methodology/approach

Data were collected from US employees (N=230) facing organizational change. Confirmatory factor analyses were performed to test the measurement model. Moderated mediation analyses, based on Hayes'(2013) method, were used to examine the hypotheses.

Findings

Overall, the findings support the hypotheses. Justice influences readiness for change through perceived organizational support only for employees who perceive their organization as highly competent.

Originality/value

While a few studies have shown that justice fosters readiness for change, little attention has been paid to the mechanisms and conditions under which justice affects readiness for change.

In addition, this research highlights in particular the importance of considering how employees assess the "can do" characteristic of their company in the context of organizational change.

1 Introduction

Organizations must constantly adapt to the ever-changing work environment, as the global economy is driven by major transformations such as technological advances and globalization. Yet, many studies have reported a high failure rate in the implementation and success of change. Failures are too often due to the underestimation of the critical role played by employees' attitudes to change, particularly resistance to change (Rafferty et al., 2013).

Employee readiness for change (RFC) is considered as the cognitive precursor to the behaviors of resistance or, on the contrary, support to change (Armenakis et al., 1993). RFC refers to the individual preparedness to cope with organizational change (Holt et al., 2007b). Empirical studies have established its key role in facilitating the success of change by demonstrating that it fosters commitment to change (Walker et al., 2007) and the effective implementation of change (Haffar et al., 2019), to name a few. As a result, many scholars consider RFC to be one of the major recent advances in the literature on change (Ford and Foster-Fishman, 2012).

Recently, a few studies have revealed the crucial role of justice perceptions in the development of RFC (Arnéguy et al., 2018; Shah, 2011). Organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness at work. As suggested by the fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 2001), employees use overarching justice perceptions, namely overall justice (OJ), to predict their company's disposition and behavior towards them, especially in times of uncertainty such as organizational changes. In the midst of organizational change, justice perceptions would indeed help employees feel more secure about their future work environment and, as a result, adapt more easily to the organizational change.

Only one study went one step further by identifying a mechanism that helps to explain the justice-RFC relationship. This study suggested and showed that justice influences RFC through perceived organizational support (Arnéguy et al., 2018). Perceived organizational support (POS) captures a social exchange process in which the employee wishes to reciprocate the favorable treatment received from the organization by helping it to achieve its goals (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017; Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). Thus, when employees feel treated fairly by their organization, they feel valued and cared by it, which in turn leads them to reciprocate this favor by facilitating the upcoming change.

Capitalizing on this first evidence, we propose in the present article to examine a boundary condition of this mediating effect of POS in the OJ-RFC relationship. In particular, we argue that perceived organizational competence (POC) enhances the influence of justice on RFC through POS. POC is defined as employees' perception concerning the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives (Kim et al., 2016). As a sign of organization's reliability in the social exchange process and its ability to achieve its ambitions for change, a high POC should increase the likelihood that the POS resulting from justice will be translated into RFC. In the present research, we therefore propose a second-stage moderated mediated model in which OJ fosters POS which is more likely to finally increase RFC, when employees perceive their organization as highly competent (see Figure 1). To test our hypotheses, a cross-sectional study measuring the four variables

of interest was conducted by questionnaire among a sample of 230 U.S. employees facing organizational change.

This research adds to the RFC literature by identifying the conditions under which a favorable treatment from the organization will indeed foster employee RFC. By examining the moderating role of POC, this research indeed helps to determine whether treating well its personnel is a sufficient condition for the development of the RFC. The alternative would be that, in combination with a favorable treatment of its personnel, the organization must also cultivate a competent corporate image for employees to consider it worthwhile to support the organization in its change process. That would highlight the importance of organizational attributes as perceived by employees in the development of employee RFC.

By suggesting that POC could in particular moderate the link between POS and RFC in the mediation tested, this research also contributes to the organizational support theory. While some research has been done on the moderators of the antecedents-POS relationships (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011), little is known on the moderators of the POS effects on outcomes. Yet, meta-analytical findings indicated a fluctuation in the effects of POS, which cannot be explained by sampling errors (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017) and calls for more research on the moderators that may be at stake. Organizational attributes such as POC should in particular play a crucial role in buffering or strengthening the POS effects.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Overall justice and readiness for change

Given the critical role of RFC in the success of change, it has received increasing attention and is considered as one of the key variables for change. Armenakis et al. (1993) defined RFC as "the cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort." (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993, pp. 681–682). Holt *et al.* (2007a) conceptualized RFC as the composite of (a) an individual's belief in his/her ability to implement the proposed change, (b) the appropriateness of the change for the organization, (c) the management support for the change and (d) the personal benefit of the change. Ford and Foster-Fishman (2012) defined RFC as the extent to which "employees believe that change is necessary, feasible, and desirable, in that the change is needed to improve current conditions, is possible to happen within the current context, and is likely to lead to positive outcomes for themselves and the larger organization" (Ford and Foster-Fishman, 2012, p. 14). Overall, definitions of RFC have consistently pointed out similar facets such as the need for change, the beneficial outcomes for both the organization and the individual, and the ability to manage the future change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Rafferty *et al.*, 2013; Ford and Foster-Fishman, 2012; Holt *et al.*, 2007a; Holt *et al.*, 2007b). Empirical research has evidenced the significant role of RFC in facilitating change success (Haffar *et al.*, 2019).

Given its beneficial effects, it is not surprising that a growing amount of research investigated its antecedents. Change-related factors, such as communication (McKay *et al.*, 2013) and change promoting behaviors among leaders (Adil, 2014) were found to contribute to RFC. Individual-related factors, such as organizational commitment (Madsen *et al.*, 2005; McKay *et al.*, 2013) and tolerance for ambiguity (Walker *et al.*, 2007) were also identified as antecedents of RFC. In addition, organizational-related factors were found to be associated with RFC. Haffar *et al.* (2014) revealed that organizational culture is related to RFC. Hameed *et al.* (2013) also showed that organizational prestige and organizational respect are positively associated with RFC. In addition, justice perceptions were studied in relation to RFC, so that distributive and procedural justice (Shah, 2011) and OJ (Arnéguy *et al.*, 2018) were shown to improve RFC.OJ refers to global evaluations of the fairness of an entity or an event that are the results of both personal experience and knowledge of the experiences of others (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009). Recently, scholars have called for a greater focus on OJ (Ambrose *et al.*, 2015), including in change settings (Marzucco *et al.*, 2014).

Theoretically, the fairness heuristic theory posits that employees rely on their OJ perception to guide their attitudes and behaviors towards their organization (Lind, 2001), including their attitudes towards change. Given the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between employees and their employer, employees are constrained to resolve a "fundamental social dilemma" by assessing whether they can safely trust their employer not to take advantage of them. To solve this dilemma, employees use their OJ perception as a heuristic, i.e. a cognitive shortcut to guide their behavior regarding their employer. This dilemma is especially salient during organizational transformation, because change raises a sense of unpredictability (Lind, 2001). When facing an upcoming change, people are thus likely to rely on their OJ perceptions to determine whether they can trust their organization without risk. If they feel treated fairly, they will be more prone to embrace the change. However, there is a surprising lack of research on the influence of OJ on employees' reactions to change (Marzucco *et al.*, 2014; Soenen *et al.*, 2017), including on RFC (Arnéguy *et al.*, 2018). For the above reasons, it seems relevant to examine the influence of OJ on RFC.

More precisely, we suggest that POS mediates the effect of OJ on RFC. POS reflects employees' beliefs concerning the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). POS should be pivotal in the OJ-RFC relationship. On the one hand, justice has long been recognized as a key driver of support. By conveying signals of supportive treatment to the focal individual, justice contributes to the formation of a "global schema of history of support" (Shore and Shore, 1995, p. 159). As such, when employees are treated fairly by their organization, they feel valued and cared by it. Not surprisingly, justice has been repeatedly found to be a strong determinant of POS (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, in the present research, we suggest that OJ fosters POS.

On the other hand, organizational support theory provides a comprehensive framework for explaining the effects of POS (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). Two key processes were proposed to explain its positive impact on outcomes that are beneficial for both employees and organizations. First, self-enhancement processes are at stake to the extent that POS helps to fulfill employees' socio-emotional needs in the workplace (e.g., need for esteem, need for affiliation, etc.; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Second, social

exchange theory (Blau, 1964) posits that employees who feel supported by their organization will repay their debt and reciprocate the favorable treatment. The fulfillment of employees' fundamental human needs is often used to explain why employees who feel supported by their organization then present better indicators, particularly in terms of subjective well-being (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). The felt obligation to return the favorable treatment and to help their organization reach its goals was mostly used to justify why supported employees then demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors at work (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017; Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). In line with the latter body of research, one may reasonably assume that the mechanism at play with regard to RFC is a social exchange process. In a context of organizational change, when employees feel supported by their organization as a result of the OJ experienced, they are likely to feel obliged to pay back the organization and contribute to its development and general efficiency. In that particular case, that means that supported employees are likely to repay their organization by facilitating the forthcoming change and, therefore, by preparing themselves to adapt to the change. Hence, we posit that POS generates RFC.

In light of the above, when employees feel treated fairly by the organization, they are likely to feel that the organization values and cares about them. This perceived support generates the desire to reciprocate the beneficial treatment, by helping the organization to achieve its project and thus by being ready for the upcoming change. So far, only one study empirically supported this assumption by showing the mediating role of POS between OJ and RFC (Arnéguy *et al.*, 2018). Capitalizing on this first evidence, we hypothesize:

H1: Perceived organizational support mediates the positive relationship between overall justice and readiness for change.

2.2 *Perceived organizational competence as a moderator*

The social exchange theory suggests that the characteristics assigned to the donor influence the strength of the social exchange relationship (Blau, 1964). Surprisingly research on the influence of organizational characteristics on the POS-outcomes relationships is scarce (Kim *et al.*, 2016; Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011) and even non-existent in contexts of change (Eby *et al.*, 2000).

In this article, we propose that perceived organizational competence (POC) strengthens the POS-RFC relationship. POC refers to employees' perception regarding the organization's ability to achieve its goals and objectives (Kim *et al.*, 2016). Two distinct literatures have evidenced its decisive role in shaping employee attitudes (Kim *et al.*, 2016). First, research on social perception has shown that competence is one of the two central features, along with warmth, used by people to describe a person or an entity (Fiske *et al.*, 2006). In fact, the stereotype content model states that people evaluate others in regards of two fundamental questions: (1) is the other a friend or an enemy? (2) is the other capable of carrying out his/her intentions? While warmth judgements are used to answer to the first question, competence judgements are employed to resolve the second question (Fiske *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, any social perception can be described through these two lenses. Empirical studies have proven the validity of this two-factor model in the formation of social perceptions (Fiske *et al.*, 2002). Second, research on trust has emphasized competence as an

elementary component of trustworthiness, along with benevolence and integrity (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). As such, competence is regularly studied in the literature on trust and its role has been confirmed, notably by meta-analytic findings concerning its relationship with trust and trustworthiness (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). Both social cognition and trust literatures have evidenced that competence can be attributed to individuals (Fiske *et al.*, 2002) but also to social entities such as organizations (Searle *et al.*, 2011).

Preliminary evidence has shown that competence of the benefactor influences the strength of POS effects. More precisely, Kim *et al.* (2016) explored the moderating role of POC on the relationship between POS and affective commitment. They found that POC strengthens the beneficial effects of POS (Kim *et al.*, 2016). However, a difference in the magnitude of the interactive effects was found across the samples (Kim *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, meta-analytical findings show variabilities in the effects of POS, which cannot be explained by sampling errors (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). Additional research on contextual variables that could influence the beneficial effects of POS is therefore needed. Finally, to the best of our knowledge, no study has ever investigated the boundary conditions of the positive effect of POS on change reactions, including RFC. In view of the above, examining the influence of competence on the effect of POS on RFC would be particularly valuable.

In this article, we suggest that POC enhances the influence of justice on RFC through POS. In particular, we argue that POC will moderate the second stage of the mediation and thus increase the positive influence of POS on RFC. There are a number of reasons why POC should play such a critical role, particularly in contexts of change.

First, we suggest that POC reassures the employee about the organization's ability to repay the employee's support for the change project. Social exchanges involve voluntary actions and unspecified obligations on the part of both parties (Blau, 1964; Mitchell *et al.*, 2012). Thus, when an employee seeks to return the beneficial treatment received from his/her organization, he/she is not sure that the organization will reciprocate the employee's favor toward the organization. The employee will naturally be alert to any signs of the organization's reliability as an exchange partner. As Blau (1964) stated: "Since there is no way to assure an appropriate return for a favor, social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations" (Blau, 1964, p. 94). Here, we suggest that when an employee receives a beneficial treatment from the organization, such as POS, s/he will gauge whether it is worth returning the favor by assessing whether the organization is a reliable partner in the exchange relationship. This evaluation can be particularly critical during organizational change, because the employee is likely to reassess his/her exchange relationship with the organization, which is in the process of transforming itself. POC will thus reassure the employee about the organization's capacity to fulfill its obligations of reciprocation in general, regardless of the change. In sum, a high POC will give him/her an indication that the efforts made in behalf of the organization are not made in vain.

Second, we propose that, in a context of change, POC is all the more relevant because it signals to employees that their efforts to prepare themselves for change are worthwhile. By indicating that their organization is capable of achieving its goals (Kim *et al.*, 2016), including their ambition for change, POC

indeed conveys the information that the organizational change project is likely to be successful. Therefore, employees may consider it worthwhile to move the change project forward by showing RFC.

Finally, as a component of trustworthiness, POS is also likely to play a crucial role, particularly in the context of organizational change. As posited by the fairness heuristic theory, employees need to know whether they can safely be vulnerable to their employer's goodwill, especially in times of uncertainty (Lind, 2001). Since POC conveys an indication of trustworthiness (Mayer *et al.*, 1995), it should reduce the sense of uncertainty arisen by the organization's decision to deploy a change. Thus, in line with the fairness heuristic theory, when POC is high, the indirect effect of justice through POS on RFC should be stronger.

In view of the above, we propose a second-stage moderated mediation model, in which OJ influences RFC through POS. However, POS is more likely to result in a higher RFC for employees with a high POC.

H2: Perceived organizational competence moderates the relationship between overall justice and readiness for change through perceived organizational support, so that the mediated relationship is stronger for employees perceiving high organizational competence.

3 Method

3.1 Sample and Procedure

Participants were recruited from Qualtrics, an online portal for administering surveys. To be able to participate in the survey, respondents had to be currently employed and involved in an ongoing or upcoming organizational change.

The survey was divided into three parts. First, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with items related to OJ, POS and POC. Next, they were asked to describe an organizational change they were facing ("Could you describe a change in your company that will be implemented and that concerns you - e.g., reorganization, introduction of a new IT system, office move, etc.). If there is no change coming, you may choose a change that is currently being implemented)". They were then encouraged to respond to an item regarding the change phase (change to be implemented versus being implemented) and to RFC items in light of the change they had described. This procedure has been previously used to ensure that the respondent refers to a specific change. Finally, they were asked to report demographic information and organizational characteristics.

A total of 230 usable questionnaires were collected. All respondents were located in the US and indicated that they worked for organizations in various sectors such as the public sector (10%), non-profit sector (10%), banking, insurance and financial services (9.1%), and personal services (8.7%). Eighty-one point three percent of the participants were women. Thirty point nine percent were under 29 years of age and 37% were over 40 years of age. Ten percent reported working in their organization for less than a year and 34.3% for more than 7 years. In terms of education, 24.3% hold a high school diploma, 22.2% hold an

associate's degree, 32.2% hold a bachelor's degree, 13% hold a graduate degree and 8.3% hold a higher degree than a graduate degree.

3.2 Measures

Respondents' level of agreement was assessed with a 7-point Likert-type scale (1="Strongly disagree"; 7="Strongly agree"), unless otherwise indicated.

Overall justice. OJ was measured with the 6-item scale developed by Ambrose and Schminke (2009). A sample item is "Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization" (α=.93).

Perceived organizational support. POS was measured with four items of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). A sample item is "The organization shows very little concern for me" (R) (α=.86).

Perceived organizational competence. POC was measured with the 6-item scale developed by Kim *et al.* (2016). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which their organization was competent, confident, capable, efficient, intelligent and skillful (α=.92).

Readiness for change. RFC was measured with the 25-item scale developed by Holt *et al.* (2007a). A sample item is "There are legitimate reasons for us to make this change". As mentioned earlier, respondents were asked to refer to the change they were experiencing, when answering these items (α=.93).

Control variables. Age, gender, tenure and level of education were found to be related to POS (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). We therefore considered controlling for the effect of these four demographic variables. Since respondents came from a variety of organizations, we felt that it might also be important to control for organizational and change characteristics to exclude other possible explanations for significant relationships. Thus, we considered controlling for organizational size and information about the change phase (1=upcoming, 2=in progress). However, we included in the subsequent analyses only control variables displaying significant correlations with the dependent variables of our model. As only organizational size was found to be significantly related to POS (r=-.18, p<.01), this variable was the only one that was introduced as an additional exogenous variable predicting POS.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Test of the measurement model

Because OJ, POS, POC and RFC items were answered by the same respondent (i.e., the focal participant), we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to test the discriminant validity of the constructs. First, we conducted the Harman single-factor test, which checks for the integrity of the factor structure and any serious problems in terms of common method variance. We compared the fit of the hypothesized measurement model with that of a model with all items loading on a single factor. The hypothesized model had an adequate fit (χ^2(164)=387.977, p<.001; RMSEA=.08; CFI=.94; SRMR=.06). In

addition, the hypothesized model had a significantly better fit than the one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2$=1245.901, Δdf=11, p<.001).

3.3.2 Relationships among variables

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates are reported in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

3.3.3 Path analysis

First, the indirect effect of OJ on RFC through POS was tested using bootstrapping. The SPSS macro command set (model 4) developed by Hayes (2013) was run to explore this indirect effect. Second, the test of the moderated mediation was carried out using bootstrapping as well. Precisely, we examined the conditional indirect effects, i.e. whether the mediating role of POS between OJ and RFC depends on the values of the moderator variable, i.e. POC. The SPSS macro command set (model 14) developed by Hayes (2013) was used to investigate the moderating effect of POC. In addition, percentile confidence intervals were calculated across 10,000 bootstrap resamples.

The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 2. OJ is significantly associated with RFC (β=.35, p<.001). However, when controlling for the mediator (POS), the relationship became non-significant (β=.13, ns). Thus, POS fully mediates the influence of OJ on RFC. Furthermore, the bootstrapped indirect effect is significant (β=.21, SE=.07, 95% CI=[08, .35]). Consequently, the mediation effect is confirmed, which supports H1.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The results of the moderated mediation analysis are presented in Table 3 and graphically depicted in Figure 2 The conditional indirect effects of OJ on RFC (through POS) were investigated at three levels of POC (i.e. at the mean level and one SD below and above the mean level). Results showed that the bootstrapped conditional indirect effects were significant only at the mean (β=.21, SE=.07, 95% CI=[.07, .34]) and upper level (β=.30, SE=.08, 95% CI=[.13, .45]) of the moderator. It was non-significant at the lower level of the moderator (β=.12, SE=.07, 95% CI=[-.02, .25]). Furthermore, the index of moderated mediation was significant (Hayes, 2015), showing that the indirect relationship between OJ and RFC depends on POC (index=.07, SE boot=.02, 95% CI=[.02, .12]). As expected, the relationship between OJ and RFC is stronger when POC is high than when POC is low. To facilitate the interpretation of the significant interaction effect, the moderating effect of POC on the relationship between POS and RFC is graphically represented in Figure 3. Overall, these results support H2.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

4 Discussion

Despite growing evidence of the decisive role of justice in facilitating the effective implementation of organizational change, little is known about the mechanisms underlying this effect and the boundary conditions under which it occurs. Filling this gap, the aim of the present study was to investigate a mediating mechanism, i.e. POS, and a potential moderator, i.e. POC, of the justice-RFC relationship. Overall, the results support our hypotheses. It was confirmed that OJ influences RFC through POS. In addition, the more highly competent employees consider their company, the more likely they are to be willing to change when they feel treated fairly by their organization. These findings have central implications both empirically and theoretically.

First, this study replicates previous findings in a different context. Replication is important, as it is inherent to the process of seeking knowledge accumulation. While Arnéguy *et al.*'s (2018) study demonstrated that POS mediated the impact of OJ on RFC on a sample of employees from a single industrial organization based in France, the present research replicates these findings on a heterogeneous sample collected in the US. Thus, the present research adds reliability to previous findings by successfully replicating the mediation of POS in the OJ-RFC relationship in a different context.

Second, by examining both a mediating and a moderating process, we respond to calls for more complex research about the mechanisms explaining the effects of OJ. An extensive review on OJ by Ambrose *et al.* (2015) points out that there is a patent paucity of research integrating complex models (e.g. combining mediators and moderators), although OJ has now entered the canon of justice literature. Our results demonstrate that OJ influences RFC through POS and that this effect is increased by POC. Moreover, understanding the drivers of RFC is important as it is considered as a crucial factor in acceptance or resistance to change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Ford and Foster-Fishman, 2012). In accordance with the fairness heuristic theory, these results confirm the decisive role of OJ in preparing people for change (Arnéguy *et al.*, 2018). When faced with an upcoming change, employees rely on their overall assessment of the fairness of the treatment they receive from their organization. However, given the limited amount of research examining the influence of OJ on RFC through complex models, further attention should be devoted to the examination of the mechanisms through which OJ affects RFC.

Finally, our findings have central implications for the organizational support theory by highlighting the crucial moderating role of POC in the POS-outcomes relationships in an environment of change. While the relationship between POS and beneficial outcomes is well established (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017), significant variability in POS effects was observed across studies (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). Our findings show that the processes ensuing from POS are increased by POC. More specifically, they show the importance of benefactor attributes in employees' responses to change. Organizational change raises questions about the possible alteration of the organizational characteristics. An employee is therefore likely to carefully evaluate whether the organization is still able to be a reliable partner in the exchange relationship. Our results show

that when an employee considers his/her organization to be highly competent, s/he is more likely to engage in a social exchange process. In turn, s/he is more inclined to reciprocate the favorable treatment by facilitating the upcoming change. Importantly, our findings indicate that treating its personnel well is certainly a necessary but not a sufficient condition. To ensure that a favorable treatment of its personnel results in a higher RFC, the organization must also cultivate a competent corporate image. Along with previous findings (Kim *et al.*, 2016), these results demonstrates the importance of benefactor attributes to influence the social exchange process during organizational change.

4.1 Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study relies on a cross-sectional design, which prevents us from drawing causal inferences about the relationships examined. Future research would greatly benefit from experimental or longitudinal designs with repeated measures that would allow causality to be tested.

Second, the results of the present research may have been exposed to the common method bias, since the variables of interest were collected at the same time and from a single source. However, self-reported measures were the most accurate way to assess employee perceptions. Moreover, we assessed common method variance with the Harman single-factor test, which reveals that the one-factor model showed a poor fit to the data. In addition, as demonstrated by Siemsen *et al.* (2010), interaction effects can be deflated by a common method bias. Thus, finding significant interaction terms provides strong evidence for an interaction. Overall, it is reasonable to conclude that the common method bias is probably not be a major threat to our research.

Third, additional control variables could have been included in our study. For example, the type of employment contract (e.g. temporary, permanent) may influence the strength of social exchange, since permanent employees may expect more from their organization than temporary employees (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011; Rousseau, 1995).

Finally, the aim of the study was to examine a boundary condition of the indirect influence of OJ on RFC through POS. Our model did not suggest that this conditional indirect effect of justice on RFC may differ depending on which facet of RFC is being considered. Although some studies have examined RFC as a whole (Walker *et al.*, 2007), other studies have indeed examined the facets of RFC separately (Haffar *et al.*, 2019). Future research should therefore explore whether the conditional indirect effects of OJ differ across facets of RFC. In addition, we focused in this study on the mediating role of POS. Future research could consider operationalizing social exchange theory via other variables such as the notion of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995).

4.2 Managerial implications

The practical implications of this research include the fact that organizations should be aware of their employees' perceptions of justice, support and competence in order to increase their chances of successfully

implementing change. However, it is unrealistic to expect organizations to develop these perceptions among employees in the blink of an eye when an organizational change is decided. They should therefore be aware of the crucial role of these perceptions in the long term. In doing so, they would be better able to cope with the increasing pace of organizational change, which is now an integral part of organizational life. Thus, they would develop a sustainable transformation capacity.

Research highlighted concrete ways to cultivate organizational justice, support and competence perceptions. With regard to justice, training supervisors in the rules of justice has proven to be an effective way to increase justice perceptions. It is also important to ensure that HR processes, such as recruitment and performance appraisal are carried out according to justice criterions. Furthermore, organizations can regularly assess perceptions of justice in order to monitor changes in levels of justice. With respect to POS, the recent results of Kurtessis *et al.*'s (2017) meta-analysis confirmed the preponderant influence of justice as a driver of employees' perceptions of the extent to which they feel supported by their organization. In addition, their findings identified concrete job conditions and HR practices, such as developmental opportunities, job security, enriching job characteristics, autonomy and participation in decision-making, that allow for an increase in POS. Finally, our study shows that organizations should pay attention to their employees' perceptions of organizational competence in order to strengthen the effects of justice and POS on RFC. Although there is little research on the determinants of POC, it has been shown that leader initiating structure fosters POC (Kim *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, leaders should be trained to define and communicate clear expectations and standards for employee role and performance. Organizations can also encourage leaders to use team meetings to illustrate these expectations with concrete examples of what is expected. Overall, our results shed light on a variety of approaches for organizations seeking to improve their capacity for change over the long term.

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations between variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. OJ	4.85	1.33	(.93)			
2. POS	4.75	1.4	.83***	(.86)		
3. POC	5.43	1.15	.63***	.59***	(.92)	
4. RFC	5.01	0.99	.47***	.50***	.41***	(.93)

Note. *N*=230. OJ=overall justice; POS=perceived organizational support; POC=perceived organizational competence; RFC=readiness for change. Scale reliabilities are reported in parentheses.
*$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$.

Table 2. Regression results for simple mediation

Variables	Coeff.	T	p
RFC regressed on OJ	.35	7.32	<.001
POS regressed on OJ	.86	20.99	<.001
RFC regressed on POS controlling for OJ	.25	3.04	<.01
RFC regressed on OJ controlling for POS	.13	1.39	*ns*

Bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 10,000 bootstrap samples			
			95% confidence interval limits
	Effect	SE	Lower	Upper
Indirect effect	.21	.07	.08	.35

Notes. *N*=230. OJ=overall justice; POS=perceived organizational support; RFC=readiness for change. R^2=.51 for the model of RFC including both OJ and POS.

Table 3. Results of the moderated mediation analysis

Predictor variable	Coeff.	SE	T	p
DV: POS (mediator variable)				
Constant	-3.89	.29	-13.36	<.001
OJ	.86	.04	20.99	<.001
Organizational size	-.08	.04	-2.02	.04
DV: RFC (dependent variable)				
Constant	4.61	.52	8.93	<.001
POS	.24	.08	2.94	.004
OJ	.06	.10	.63	.53
POC	.18	.07	2.45	.05
POS * POC	.09	.28	3.21	.002

Conditional indirect effect at range value of perceived organizational competence (M +/- SD)				
POC	Coeff.	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
- 1 SD	.12	.07	-.02	.25
M	.21	.07	.07	.34
+ 1 SD	.30	.08	.13	.45

Notes. N=230.

OJ=overall justice; POS=perceived organizational support; POC=perceived organizational competence; RFC=readiness for change. Bootstrap sample size=10.000.
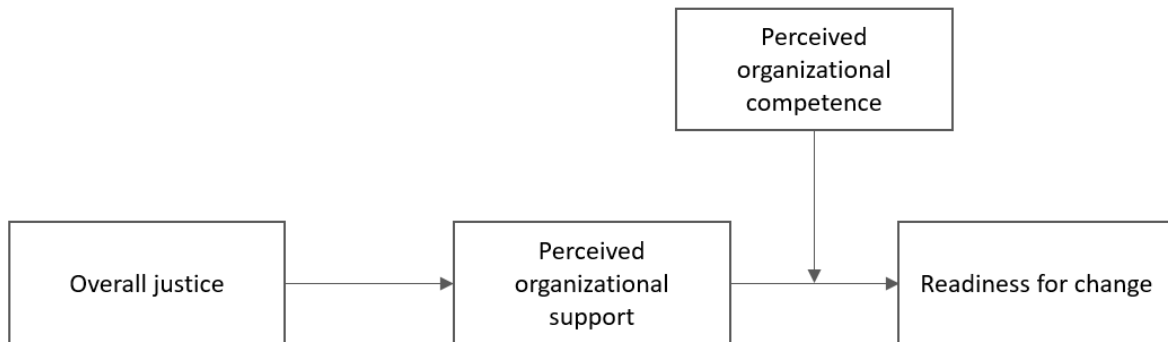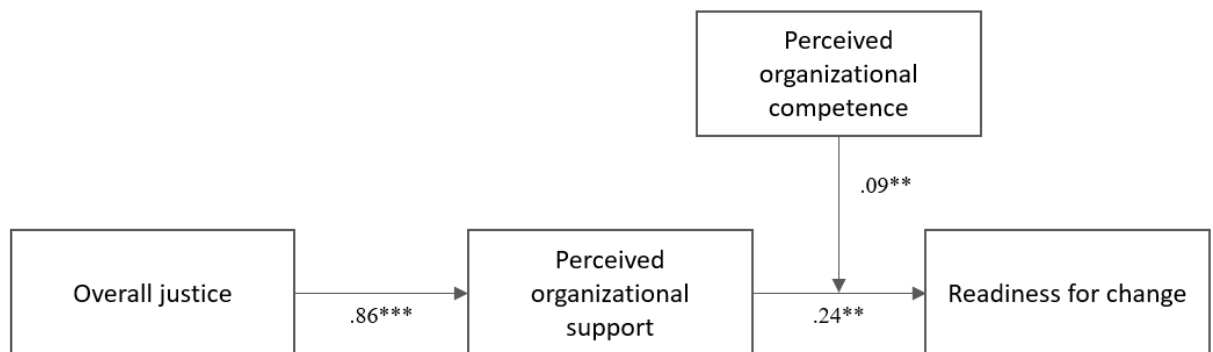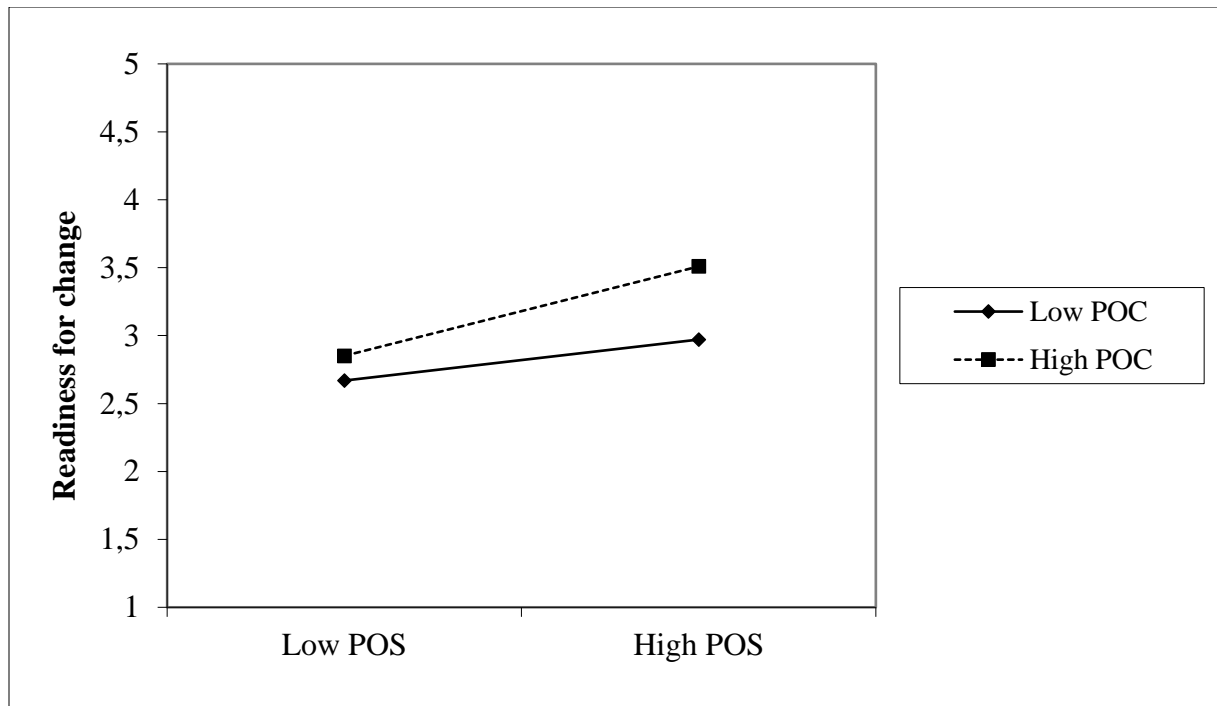
Figure 1. Hypothesized model

Figure 2. Results of the moderated mediation analysis

Note. *N*=230. Unstandardized parameters were displayed.
*$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$.

Figure 3. Graph of interaction between perceived organizational support and perceived organizational competence on readiness for change.

Note. POS=perceived organizational support; POC=perceived organizational competence.