

Can Personality Matter More Than Justice? A Study of Downsizing and Layoff Survivors in the
USA and Implications for Cross Cultural Study

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A PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE ACADEMY OF BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
2000
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
PRAGUE, CEZH REPUBLIC

Abstract

This paper reports on a field study of 167 survivors of organizational downsizing and layoffs in the USA. The study examined the role of individual psychological disposition, perceptions of psychological contract violation, and organizational attempts at procedural justice explaining variation in desired employee outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction. Moderated hierarchical regression suggests that dispositional attributes likely have an equal or greater influence on the relationship than management attempts at organizational justice. Implications for human resource management practices across cultural boundaries and emerging economies are given due consideration.

INTRODUCTION

Abandoning the traditional concept of internal employment, management increasingly moves toward generating “mean-and-lean” organizational structures (Hartley, 1995; Pfeffer, 1997). Hundreds of organizations have conducted downsizing and layoffs in the past decade (Burke & Nelson, 1998) with the intent of reducing costs and promoting organizational efficiency. More than forty-three million jobs were eliminated in the United States between 1979 and 1996 (Uchitelle & Kleinfeld, 1996). Since 1980, one-third of U.S. households have had a family member lose a job (Miller, 1996).

Reports also indicate that downsizing and layoffs have an effect on many “survivors” who remain employed after the reorganization, the same employees expected to make the organization run more effectively with fewer human resources (Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, & Rentz, 1995). Recent research suggests that when survivors view layoff and downsizing procedures in their organization to be unfair, they are likely to exhibit decreased morale, self-esteem, organizational commitment, trust, job security, and productivity (Brockner, Grover, Reed, Dewitt, & O’Malley, 1987; Brockner, Grover, & Blonder, 1988; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995; Herbert, 1996)

Statement of the Problem

Research dealing with downsizing and layoffs has been largely dominated by a “macro” focus on systems such as leadership, institutional theory, and organizational development (Judge, Thoresen, & Pucik, 1996). Studies of individual behavior as it relates to downsizing and layoffs has typically focused on the “upper echelons perspectives” and the role of top management in selecting and instituting change (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Studies of more “micro” level issues, such as idiosyncrasies and characteristics of survivors of downsizing and layoffs, are noticeably limited. Neglected is the possibility that survivor response to downsizing and layoffs may lie as much with personality traits as with the more widely reported attempts of top management to “manage” the impact of reorganization.

Critics call for a more “person-oriented” focus in research of organizational behavior and organizational development (Judge et al., 1996). This paper responds to that challenge by

investigating the influence of managerial attempts at procedural justice and psychological disposition on the relationship between survivor perceptions of psychological contract violation after downsizing and layoffs and outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction.

A MODEL OF THE MODERATING INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISPOSITION ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION
AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

How a downsizing or layoff is handled may have important implications for future firm productivity. Figure 1 represents a model of the variables of interest to this study.

Downsizing/Layoff Management Intervention Desired Employee Outcome

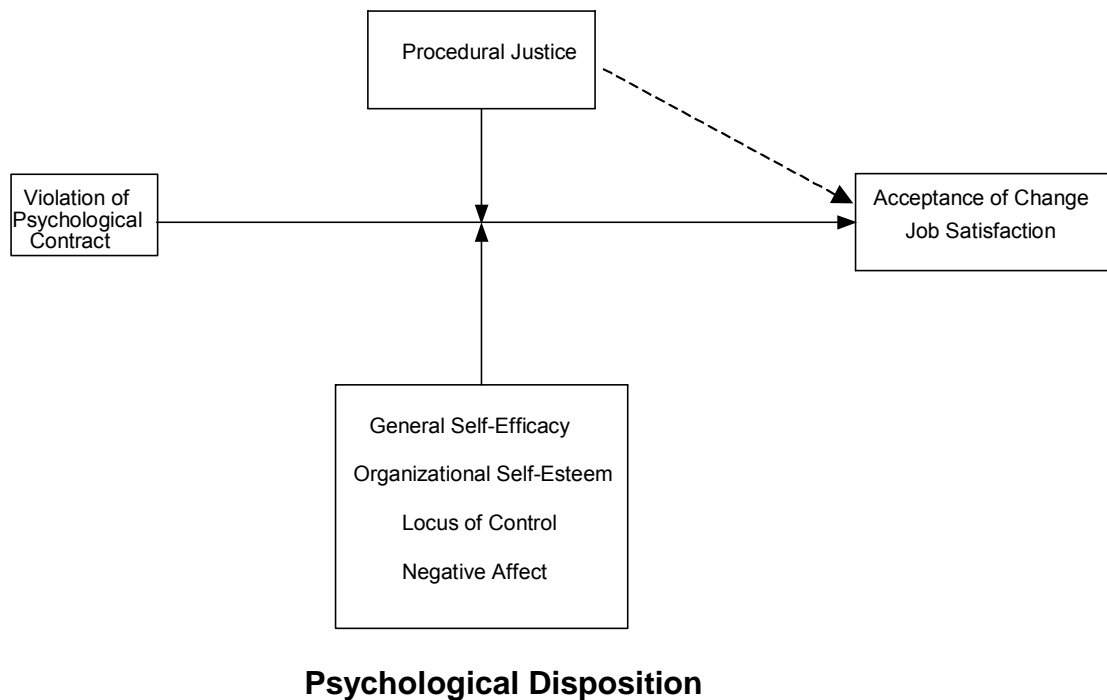


Figure 1. A model of possible moderators of the relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and desired employee outcomes among downsizing and layoff survivors.

Psychological Contract Violation

A lens for understanding the impact of downsizing and layoffs on organizational survivors is that of psychological contract violation. Rousseau (1995) suggests that organizational employees develop an exchange perspective with their employer that goes beyond the normal exchange of employee time and effort for customary organizational rewards. This belief in an unwritten contract of mutual obligation involves elements of trust, a sense of relationship, the expectation of future benefits, and constitutes a psychological contract with respect to the employee-employer relationship (Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). When organizational change such as downsizing and layoffs occur, survivors may not get what they wanted, expected, or believed they were entitled to from the employment relationship. A sense of contract violation is frequently associated with negative consequences such as decreases in morale, self-esteem, organizational commitment, trust, job security, and productivity, and increased psychological disturbances (Brockner, Grover, Reed, Dewitt, & O'Malley, 1987; Brockner, Grover, & Blonder, 1988; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995; Herbert, 1996; Krackhardt & Porter, 1985; Noer, 1993).

Desired Employee Outcomes

Employers openly acknowledge the trauma an organization experiences when undergoing downsizing and layoffs, but at the same time they hope for specific outcomes from surviving employees that will minimize the potential of negative consequences influences that might hinder achievement of critical organizational goals and objectives.

Acceptance of change. Some organizations are effective because their structures naturally enhance stability and inertia. Resistance to change is then supported by well-established policies and patterns. After downsizing or layoffs, these patterns are often shaken. In an attempt to minimize the impact of the change, employees may cling to the old and familiar by way of now-irrelevant reports, pointless meetings, and routine expenditures (Scott, 1998). Thus, the degree to which surviving employees accept the new goals and structures as fair and rational organizational responses to the business environment may directly impact the behavior of

organizational survivors and, ultimately, organizational outcomes.

Job Satisfaction. Brief (1998) defined job satisfaction as an internal state that is expressed by affective and/or cognitive evaluation of an experienced job with some degree of favor. Job dissatisfaction occurs when appraisal of one's job experiences fails to produce this pleasurable or positive emotional state (Spector, 1997). While little empirical evidence exists linking the degree of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction to task performance (Brief, 1998), the potential for job satisfaction to influence organizational goals and objectives is extensive. Levels of job satisfaction in individuals retaining internal employment after downsizing and layoffs have consistently demonstrated a correlation with measures of employee turnover (Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985), burnout (Bacharach, Bambnerger, & Conley, 1991), and counter productive behavior (Chen & Spector, 1992; Keenan & Newton, 1984).

Management Attempts at Procedural Justice

There has been increasing interest in proactive management interventions designed to reduce negative employee outcomes associated with downsizing and layoffs. A proactive management intervention of particular interest to this study is the attempt to ensure procedural justice. Brockner, Knovsky, Cooper-Schneider, Folger, Martin, and Bies (1994) found that if layoffs were perceived to be procedurally fair (consistent, based on accurate information, followed moral and ethical standards, etc.) perceptions of psychological contract violation were less likely. Thus, working toward procedural justice and fairness has become a viable strategy for avoiding many of the negative consequences reported among survivors of layoffs. Such interventions may directly influence outcomes such as acceptance of change or job satisfaction, or indirectly by moderating the relationship with perceptions of psychological contract violation among survivors of downsizing and layoffs.

Psychological Dispositions

Unfortunately, management interventions aimed at enhancing perceptions of organizational justice may produce the desired results in one situation, only partially produce these results in another, and fail totally in still another. Seldom are employee outcomes clearly predicted by such management interventions. It behooves academics and practitioners alike to

consider variables beyond procedural justice that may influence the relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and desired employee outcomes in the presence of downsizing and layoffs.

An extensive review of the psychological literature by Lightsey, Jr. (1996) suggested that certain personality traits, relatively stable across one's life experiences, likely influences survivor behavior and attitude after a downsizing and lay-off. This observation is extended to the present study through Dispositional Attribute Theory (Locke, 1976; Judge, Lock, & Durham, 1997). Dispositional Attribute Theory holds that traits are the fundamental building blocks of human personality and construct broad predispositions to behave, feel, and/or think in particular ways not easily influenced by management interventions (Brief, 1998). Indeed, Staw et al. (1985) recognized the desirability of sorting out the influence of dispositional traits and job characteristics on job attitudes. For instance, work by Avery, Bouchard, Segal, and Abraham (1989) reported strong similarities between the job satisfaction experienced by identical twins reared apart, despite the fact that members of each pair had held different types of jobs. Hollister (1998) noted that other studies of twins have produced an impressive list of attributes or behaviors that appear to owe at least as much to heredity as to the environment. The list includes alienation, extroversion, traditionalism, leadership, career choice, risk aversion, and vulnerability to stress.

There is mounting evidence that people are born with varying tendencies to appraise the environment and process information from life's experiences (DeLongis, Lazarus, & Folkman, 1988; McGue & Bouchard, 1989) in such a manner as to thrive in their environment by maintaining optimal feelings and stimulation and fostering a sense of well-being and health (Lightsey, Jr., 1996). Work by Judge et al. (1997) has provided a basis from which to speculate that such genetic predisposition results in personality traits or dispositions that moderate any relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and employee outcomes in situations of downsizing and layoffs. Three likely "pre-wired" dispositions of interest to this study are general self-efficacy, negative affect, and locus of control.

Hollister (1998), on the other hand, proposed that dispositional factors are not commands that certain outcomes will or will not be realized but merely nudges toward certain outcomes, for

which environmental factors will likely nudge back. With this in mind, a fourth disposition of interest to this study, most likely environmental in origin, is organizational based self-esteem (OBSE).

Generalized self-esteem. Research generally has found self-esteem to be a relevant variable in the measurement of workplace attitudes and behaviors (Judge, et al., 1996). In its broadest and most fundamental sense, self-esteem refers to peoples' appraisals of themselves (Judge, et al., 1997). Most researchers assume that self-esteem is a relatively stable personality trait that is formed by the end of the adolescent years and not easily altered (Tharenou, 1979). Recognizing the debate regarding self-esteem and generalized self-efficacy, Lightsey, Jr. (1996) concluded that self-esteem and generalized self-efficacy are moderately related and probably reflect the same construct at different levels of generality. The authors of this study adopted a generalized definition of self-esteem that captures the concept of self-efficacy.

Generalized self-esteem can be considered to encompass an individual's judgment of one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise general control over many key events in one's life and deal specifically with life's challenges (Judge et al., 1997). Therefore, generalized self-esteem should be associated with an increased likelihood of dealing with work- and career-related difficulties such as perceptions of psychological contract violation among survivors of a downsizing or layoff. Indeed, there is evidence of a direct relationship between generalized self-esteem and coping with major organizational transformations (Judge et al, 1996; Wanberg & Banas, 1997). Thus, generalized self-esteem may directly influence outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction, or indirectly by moderating the relationship with survivor perceptions of psychological contract violation.

Organization-based self-esteem. Work by Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham (1989) advanced the concept of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as reflecting the self-perceived value individuals have of themselves as organizational members acting within an organizational context. As part of an individual's belief system, OBSE is believed to be relatively stable over time and motivates individuals high in the attribute to engage in behaviors that

enhance their organizational worth.

Individuals high in OBSE are believed to derive intrinsic satisfaction coupled with reinforcement of their self-esteem when engaged in work related tasks (Pierce et al., 1989). For instance, faced with impending change, such individuals are likely to believe that their unique competency positions them to make a valuable contribution to the organization in its time of crisis. Being able to “step up to the plate and make a difference” reinforces their perception self-worth within the organizational context and affirms their status as a key player for that organization. This should hold true even if the individual was to perceive that the existing psychological contract was disappearing and a new employment contract was evolving.

Pierce et al. (1989) further proposed that increased self-acceptance within an organizational context would likely be associated with increased attachment or organizational commitment. As an individual's level of organizational worth increases, need satisfaction will likely increase and thus position the organization as a need-satisfying agent in the individual's life. Because the organization satisfies needs, during periods of organizational change individuals high in OBSE are likely to integrate the organization into their lives, to internalize the organization, and make its goals and values their own. This concept is supported by work suggesting that employees high in OBSE are more likely to accept organizational decisions (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986) and judge their interactions with the organization to be fair (Tyler & Bies, 1990).

In summary, OSBE should be associated with an increased likelihood of dealing with work- and career-related difficulties and directly influence outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction, or indirectly by moderating the relationship with survivor perception of psychological contract violation.

Negative Affect. While much has been made about the power of positive thinking during times of stress, ambiguity, and chaos, Lightsey, Jr.'s (1996) review of the psychological literature indicated that negative thoughts are uncorrelated with positive thoughts and may be more enduring and less fluctuating than positive emotions. Compared to positive thoughts, negative thoughts account for more of the variance in depression, paralleling the greater impact of negative affect over positive affect. Individuals with high negative affect have been found to be

more likely to report distress, discomfort, and dissatisfaction over time while individuals with low negative affect are more satisfied, self-secure, and calm (Watson & Clark, 1984).

Is negative affect an individual trait that predisposes individuals to be unhappy? Costa and McCrae (1989) found that negative affect was stable over time. Similarly, Staw and Ross (1985) reported that some people appear to have fewer negative thoughts and tend to be happier over time than others regardless of their situations.

Research has shown that people high in negative affect pay more attention to details (Avery, Renz, & Watson, 1998), and, in general, interpret ambiguous stimuli more negatively (Brief, 1998) suggesting that such individuals are biased toward interpreting their job circumstances and responding to those circumstances more negatively. Thus, these individuals may look more closely for instances of psychological contract violation during downsizing and layoffs. Wanberg, Brunce, and Gavin (1999) suggest that negative affect may help explain perceptions of unfairness of layoff events and related attitudes over and beyond the absence or presence of proactive management interventions. Thus, negative affect may directly influence outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction, or indirectly by moderating the relationship with survivor perception of psychological contract violation.

Locus of control. Rotter (1966) advanced the concept of locus of control as the perception by the individual of his or her ability to exercise control over the environment. Specific to this study, locus of control converges around control of the outcomes to which performance leads. Those individuals characterized by an internal locus of control are more likely to regard their personal career situation as a result of ability, while viewing failure as a consequence of external factors of chance. Individuals with external locus of control exhibit the opposite tendencies. It should be noted that while locus of control and self-efficacy are related terms, they are conceptually (and empirically) distinct (Judge et al, 1996).

Anderson (1977) reported that executives high in internal locus of control were more successful than high externals in terms of managing the performance of their organizations following a disaster. There is reason to expect similar relationships between this construct and desired employee outcomes after downsizing and layoffs.

There is evidence of a robust relationship between internal locus of control and individual adaptation to change within work organizations (Judge et al., 1996). Individuals with high internal locus of control can be assumed to react to perceived organizational injustices associated with downsizing and layoffs differently than those with high external locus of control. High internals likely reevaluate the situation, utilize more effective methods of coping, and conclude that they have the control necessary to make right any perceived injustices on the part of the organization. High externals, on the other hand, likely feel helpless and incapable of righting the wrongs they perceive under similar circumstances and seek to redress the situation by either looking for opportunities to leave the firm or engaging in counter productive behaviors.

Therefore, internal locus of control should be associated with an increased likelihood of dealing with work- and career-related difficulties and may directly influence outcomes such as acceptance of the change and job satisfaction, or indirectly by moderating the influence of survivor perception of psychological contract violation.

Research Questions

Four questions were at the center of this study:

- 1- Do perceptions of psychological contract violation explain variance in job satisfaction and acceptance of change among survivors of organizational downsizing and layoffs?
- 2- Do perceptions of the presence/absence of procedural justice on the part of management contribute to a sense of job satisfaction and acceptance of the change among survivors of downsizing and layoffs?
- 3- Does the psychological disposition of downsizing and layoff survivors influence their level of job satisfaction and acceptance of the change?
- 4- If a relationship exists between perceptions of psychological contract violation and job satisfaction and acceptance of change among survivors of downsizing and layoffs, does that relationship change with one's psychological disposition or perception of the presence/absence of procedural justice?

MEASURES AND METHODS

Sample and Population

The target population for this study consisted of employees in 12 business and healthcare organizations in the Midwest and on the West Coast who had retained internal employment after experiencing organizational change in the form of either downsizing or layoffs.

Permission to conduct this survey was granted by the appropriate management of the organizations before the surveys were distributed. The subjects received the survey with a letter explaining the purpose of the research and guaranteeing anonymity. Respondents were asked to return their completed survey to one principle contact of the research group, not the management

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Count	Percentage
Total Respondents	172	100.0
Gender		
Male	47	27.3
Female	123	71.5
Missing	2	1.2
Job Classification		
Health Care Provider	35	20.3
Professional	19	11.0
Technical	5	2.9
Clerical	19	11.0
Administrative	35	20.3
Manual Laborer	4	2.3
Service Provider	7	4.1
Management/Supervision	39	22.7
Missing	9	5.2
Job Status		
Full-time	153	89.0
Part-time	14	8.1
Missing	5	2.9
Age		
20 years or younger	1	0.6
21 to 25 years	8	4.7
26 to 35 years	44	25.6
36 to 45 years	65	37.8
46 to 55 years	45	26.2
56 to 65 years	6	3.5
Greater than 66 years	1	0.6
Missing	2	1.2
Organizational Tenure		
Less than 1 year	16	9.3
1 to 5 years	55	32.0
6 to 10 years	30	17.4
11 to 15 years	22	12.8
16 to 20 years	21	12.2
More than 20 years	26	15.1
Missing	2	1.2
Income Level		
Less than \$10,999	2	1.2
\$11,000 to \$20,999	31	18.0
\$21,000 to \$30,999	43	25.0
\$31,000 to \$40,999	35	20.3
\$41,000 to 50,999	31	18.0
\$51,000 to \$60,999	15	8.7
\$61,000 to \$75,999	4	2.3
Greater than \$76,000	1	0.6

of their organization. The letter included a return date, a central drop-off site for the completed survey, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return mailing. Follow-up procedures included contacting designated managers via telephone to determine distribution and completion of the surveys. Surveys were distributed to 654 employees. Within a four-week period, 194 surveys were returned, for an overall response rate of 29.7 percent. A useable sample of 172 responses (26%) was obtained. Demographic characteristics are provided in Table 1.

Measures

Violation of the psychological contract. Direct measure of psychological contract violation was not possible in this study, and the authors readily acknowledge this fact. To create a surrogate measure of psychological contract violation, the authors reasoned that a decrease in respondent levels of organizational commitment from before the downsizing or layoff to that existing after the event should create a functional indicator. The respondent's current level of organizational commitment was measured with a five-item scale developed by O' Reilly & Chatman (1986). Higher scores indicated higher levels of organizational commitment. For instance, one item asked survivors about their agreement (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) with the statement that the respondent really cared about the fate of this organization. The scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of .76.

Because this was a cross-sectional study, securing a measure of pre-change level of organizational commitment required a retrospective response. Acknowledging the debate surrounding retrospective responses, the authors chose a previously published retrospective scale (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992) to measure the respondent's level of organizational commitment prior to the experience of organizational change. Higher scores indicated higher levels of prior organizational commitment. For example, one item inquired if prior to the organizational change, the respondent expected to work for the company for a long time (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha produced by this scale was .78.

To produce a third scale capable of indicating a shift in respondent levels of organizational commitment, scores on each of the two scales were first converted to standardized

scores (Z) scores so that a comparison would be possible (Moore, 1999). To produce a working measure of psychological contract violation, the respondent's standardized score on the current measure of organizational commitment was subtracted from the respondent's standardized score on the retrospective measure of organizational commitment. A positive value in the resulting scale was interpreted as indication of a decrease in organizational commitment and, by proxy, an indicator psychological contract violation. That is, the more severe the decrease in organizational commitment the more one would assume that the respondent perceived a violation of the psychological contract.

Management attempts at procedural justice. An eight-item scale constructed by Salter et al. (1997) was used to measure the effectiveness of communication and perceptions of fairness from the survivor's perspective. This scale was an adaptation of an earlier scale developed by Brockner et al. (1995) for measuring procedural justice and survivor reaction to layoffs. For example, one item stated "Management provided ample opportunity for employees to express their views on how the reorganization should be carried out." Respondents replied using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores were interpreted as reflecting perception of higher levels of procedural justice, and the scale's reliability as indicated by Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Acceptance of Change. A three-item scale by Brockner et al. (1995) was used to assess survivor acceptance of the change accompanying their organization's downsizing or layoffs. Higher scores indicated higher levels of acceptance. For example, one item asked survivors about their agreement (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) with the statement that overall, the respondent was satisfied with the changes in work conditions. Higher scores were interpreted as reflecting higher levels of acceptance of change, and the scale's Cronbach's alpha was .93.

Job satisfaction. Brief (1998) made a strong argument that the concept of job satisfaction contains both an affective and cognitive domain and that current measures generally capture either the cognitive or affective domain, but seldom both. It was Brief's position that of all the measures of job satisfaction, only the "faces scale" captured both affective and cognitive

dimensions equally. Thus, the authors used Kunin's (1955) "7 faces scale" to measure job satisfaction. Scores on the scale were recoded so that higher scores were indicative of higher levels of job satisfaction.

Generalized self-esteem. The authors constructed a seven-item scale measuring generalized self-esteem by modifying items used by Pierce et al. (1989) and Salter et al. (1997). For instance, one item asked the respondent the extent of agreement (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) with the statement "I am important". Higher scores were associated with higher levels of generalized self-esteem. The scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Organizational-based self-esteem. A measure of organizational-based self-esteem was obtained from a five-item scale suggested by Pierce et al. (1989). Higher scores were indicative of higher levels of organizational-based self-esteem. For instance, one item asked the respondent the extent of agreement (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) with the statement "I count around here." The scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

Negative affect. The authors used a modified version of the PANAS scales (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to measure negative affect. This scale presented the respondent with eight words in no specific order. However, the words represented positive and negative anchors for four emotional states (e.g. happy and sad). Respondents were asked to rate the degree (1= a great deal to 5 = not at all) to which each of the eight words described their emotional state. After recoding the negative anchors, a high score was interpreted as indicative of a high level of negative affect and a low score as indication of a low level of negative affect. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .85.

Locus of control. The authors measured locus of control by creating three-items suggested by Brockner and Chen (1996). Higher scores were associated with higher degrees of internal locus of control. For instance, one item asked the respondent the extent of agreement (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) with the statement "How well I do is a direct reflection of the actions I take." The scale produced a Cronbach's alpha of .75.

Methods

Factor analysis. Because of a likely interrelationship between the variables in this study, a factor analysis was conducted using all the items associated with the variables. Both the measure of current level organizational commitment and the retrospective measure of the preexisting level of commitment used in scale of psychological contract violation were entered separately to ensure that their individual items did not cross load. The data were subjected to orthogonal rotation in an attempt to minimize the number of factors. An eight-factor solution was indicated on the basis of a minimum eigenvalue =1 and the interpretability of the factors. These eight factors explained approximately 70 percent of the common variance. Items were dropped sequentially when they failed to load equal or greater than .40 or when the difference between cross-loading on two factors was less than .20. Of the initial 38 items, the final solution contained 37 items that met the criterion for inclusion.

Factor 1 consisted of seven items reporting negative terms used by the respondents to describe their emotional state, and the label of Negative Affect was retained for this factor. Factor 2 consisted of five items measuring respondent feelings of worth to the organization, and the label of Organization-Based Self-Esteem was retained for this factor. Factor 3 consisted of three items describing respondents' feelings relative to the outcomes of the changes they had experienced, and the label of Acceptance of Change was given this factor. Factor 4 consisted of four items describing respondent attachment to the organization, and the label of Organizational Commitment was retained for this factor. Factor 5 consisted of three items reporting respondents' sense of personal control of their environments, and the label Locus of Control was retained for this factor. Factor 6 consisted of four items reporting respondent general sense of worth (independent of the organization), and the label of Generalized Self-Esteem was given to this factor.

Moderated hierarchical regression. Two separate models were tested using moderated hierarchical regression. In the first model, acceptance of change served as the dependent variable, and in the second, job satisfaction served as the dependent variable. In testing both models, respondent age, organizational tenure, and gender were controlled by

entering in the first step of the regression. At the second step, the measure of psychological contract violation was regressed on the dependent variable to determine the strength of relationship between the two. At the third step, perception of procedural justice was regressed on the dependent variable to determine if it made a contribution toward understanding the variance in the dependent variable beyond that of perception of psychological contract violation.

At the fourth step, the four dispositional variables were regressed in a stepwise manner on the dependent variable to determine which, if any, made a contribution to the regression equation beyond that of the previously entered variables. A forward stepwise approach was taken at this point because the authors lacked a theoretical basis that would have dictated the entry of the dispositional variables in any specific order and the study was exploratory at this point.

At the fifth step, the question of concern was if a relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and the dependent variable changed with one's psychological disposition or perception of procedural justice? That is, was there evidence that any of these variables act as a moderator to the relationship. This question was addressed by creating variables that were the cross-product of psychological contract violation and either perceptions of procedural justice or one of the four psychological dispositions. These cross-products were regressed in a stepwise manner on the dependent variable to determine which, if any, made a contribution to explaining variance in the dependent variable beyond those already entered and would likely act as a moderator. As in the previous step, a forward stepwise approach was implemented at this point because the authors lacked a theoretical basis that would have dictated the entry of the cross-product variables in any specific order.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of the variables in this study are displayed in Table 2. Results of the moderated hierarchical regression are found in Table 3.

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TABLE 3. Moderated Hierarchical Regression on Acceptance of Organizational Change and Job Satisfaction of Survivors of Downsizing and Layoffs.

Variables	Acceptance of Change				Job Satisfaction			
	β Coefficients	R ²	ΔR^2	F	β Coefficients	R ²	ΔR^2	F
Step #1								
Age	-.199				-.217			
Gender	.004				.385			
Organizational Tenure	-.014				.082			
		.014	.014	.689		.026	.026	1.316
Step #2								
Perceptions of Contract Violation	-.274	.098	.084	13.369***	-.627	.242	.215	41.057***
Step #3								
Perceptions of Procedural Justice	.628	.400	.301	71.388***	.610	.386	.143	33.438***
Step #4								
Negative Affect	-.425	.475	.075	20.304***	-.901	.557	.171	55.041***
Locus of Control	.210	.494	.019	5.365*	.383	.585	.028	9.630**
Step #5								
Contract Violation x Negative Affect					-.205	.610	.025	8.847**
Overall	df= 7, 140	.494		19.598***	df=8, 140	.610		27.427***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Moderated hierarchical regression revealed that after controlling for age, gender, and organizational tenure, perceptions of violation of the psychological contract made a significant contribution toward explaining acceptance of the organizational change by survivors of downsizing and layoffs. Survivors' perceptions of managerial attempts at procedural justice made an additional significant contribution ($\Delta R^2 = .301$, $f = 71.338$, $p < .001$). However, beyond the contribution made by perceptions of contract violation and perceptions of attempts at procedural

justice, two psychological dispositions, negative affect ($\Delta R^2 = .075$, $f = 20.304$, $p < .001$) and locus of control ($\Delta R^2 = .019$, $f = 5.365$, $p < .05$), appeared to make an additional contribution. No evidence of an interaction effect was found. The absence of a significant interaction effect indicated that the model which best fits the data would be an additive model in which a survivor's score on acceptance of change is best explained by the aggregate contributions of the variables in the model (Pedhazur, 1982). In this model, approximately half of the variance in scores on acceptance of change is accounted for by variance in perceptions of contract violation, perceptions of management attempts at procedural justice, and the psychological dispositions of negative affect and locus of control.

The same moderated hierarchical regression procedure revealed an interaction between perceptions of psychological contract violation and negative affect ($\Delta R^2 = .025$, $f = 8.847$, $p < .01$) that made a significant contribution to explaining variance in the job satisfaction beyond the added contribution of perception of contract violation, perception of management attempts at procedural justice, and the four psychological dispositions. The presence of the interaction effect indicates that an additive model is not adequate to describe the data. Simply put, the individual contributions of the variables in this model are not meaningful in the presence of the interaction, and it would be inappropriate to attempt interpret such coefficients (Pedhazur, 1982). Pedhazur argues that the best measure of the importance of the interaction is simply the increment to R^2 resulting from the inclusion of the cross-product. However, because there are, in general, high correlations between the product vectors and the variables from which they were generated, increments in R^2 should be expected to be small. Thus, the fact that the cross-product of negative affect and perception of psychological contract violation was able to contribute an additional 2.5% toward explaining variance in job satisfaction after the individual variables have already explained approximately 59% of the variance should be considered an indicator of the interaction's importance to this model.

DISCUSSION

Do perceptions of psychological contract violation explain variance in job satisfaction and acceptance of change among survivors of organizational downsizing and layoffs? In both models,

perceptions of psychological contract violation demonstrated a significant negative correlation with the dependent variables. There is reason to believe that the greater the degree of perceived violation of the psychological contract among survivors the less likely they will be to accept the change desired by management or experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

Do perceptions of the presence/absence of procedural justice contribute to a sense of job satisfaction and acceptance of the change among survivors of downsizing and layoffs? Our results suggest that strong perceptions of managerial efforts to conduct downsizing and layoffs in a procedurally just manner increase the potential that survivors will accept the change implemented by management. While there is some evidence that survivor perceptions of procedural justice might influence job satisfaction, the presence of a strong interaction effect between negative affect and perception of psychological contract violation makes it difficult to accurately assess such a contribution.

Does the psychological disposition of downsizing and layoff survivors influence their level of job satisfaction and acceptance of the change? The results of this study suggest that a propensity for negative affect and a high degree of internal locus of control will influence survivor acceptance of the change implemented by management. More specifically, the greater a survivor's predisposition for negative affect, the less likely it appears that the individual will come to accept the change. On the other hand, the greater the degree to which a survivor is oriented toward an internal locus of control the more likely the individual appears to embrace the change. Unfortunately, such a relationship is not as straightforward when discussing survivor job satisfaction because of the strong interaction effect between negative affect and perceptions of psychological contract violation.

If a relationship exists between perceptions of psychological contract violation and job satisfaction and acceptance of change among survivors of downsizing and layoffs, does that relationship change with one's psychological disposition or perception of the presence/absence of procedural justice? There is no evidence in this study that one's psychological predisposition or degree of perceived managerial attempts at procedural justice influence the relationship between psychological contract violation and embracing the organizational change associated with

downsizing or layoffs. In other words, the ability of survivor perceptions of procedural justice and their predisposition for negative affect and locus of control to explain their acceptance of recently experienced organizational change appears to operate independent of their perceptions of psychological contract violation.

However, the results of this study suggest that the level of job satisfaction reported by survivors in this study is best explained by the interaction between perceptions of psychological contract violation and a predisposition for negative affect. That is, the ability of perceptions of psychological contract violation to influence the level of job satisfaction reported by survivors appears to be dependent upon the degree to which the individual is predisposed to a negative affect. It would appear that assuming that managerial attempts at procedural justice reduce the influence of psychological contract violation is not the most promising approach for explaining the job satisfaction of survivors of downsizing and layoffs.

Implications for managers

Overall, our results suggest that dispositional attributes may be as important as management interventions in determining who survives, who blossoms, and who walks around perpetually wounded after reorganizations, downsizings and layoffs. Our findings reinforce and extend the last decade's growing awareness that models of organizational behavior are seriously underdeveloped if they fail to include personality as a critical element (Mount & Barrick, 1998). Specifically, our results suggest that dispositional variables -- especially negative affect, as well as locus of control -- dramatically influence survivors' reaction to an organization's downsizing in terms of their acceptance of the change and experienced job satisfaction. We share the conviction of Mount & Barrick (1998) who suggest that "...we do, in fact, have personalities and what's more they do matter" (p.854-855).

Limitations and Future Research

While the results of the present study are significant both theoretically and analytically, there are a few methodological limitations. A few of the respondents indicated that the length of the survey instrument was discouraging. This may have affected the response rate (29.7%). Because of the retrospective nature of the survey, inquiring about downsizing activities occurring

from three years to three months prior, the ability of respondents to accurately assess their feelings about management's behavior at the time of downsizing could have been compromised.

Our use of two separate measures, one of which was retrospective, to produce a scale estimating perceptions of psychological contract violation is certainly open to dispute. It is possible that downsizing and layoffs may cause too much interference with the psychological processes to validate use of a retroactive pre-measure. However, such practice is not unknown in survey research and has been successfully utilized by Brockner et al., (1992) and Moore (1995).

Further, we recognize the opportunity to capitalize on chance that may have occurred by using the same data set to verify the measures and test the models.

Finally, this study inherits all the weaknesses of surveys and self-report measures, and because this study was cross-sectional in nature, the relationships may be subject to temporal change.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Study

As Triandis (1994) noted, too often researchers assume that what works in the US will not work in country X. Many researchers appear to assume that human behavior is so heavily determined by culture-based understandings and beliefs, by tradition, and by a thousands of contextual factors that it seems almost certain that variation in culture and situation will radically alter any psychological process (Lind, Tyler, & Huo, 1997). The authors of this study were concerned if generalization of their findings should be limited to populations similar to their sample or might have a wider application. The study is certainly typical of the US-centric focus that continues to limit management/organizational research, and all respondents in the study were residents of the US, working for firms located in the US. However, Church and Lonner (1998) advocate that the major goal of cross-cultural psychology should be to search for psychological universals. That is, turning to culture as a way to extend the range of variation of psychological phenomenon or to clarify related variables. With this in mind, the authors pondered the degree to which the variables important to this study could be expected to demonstrate validity and stability across cultures. For instance, will measurement of personality traits hold

constant across cultures? Will perceptions of organizational justice vary by culture? What influence will culture have on the relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and job satisfaction and/or acceptance of change beyond that explained by psychological disposition and perceptions of procedural justice?

Church & Lonner (1998) summarize a growing body of literature that suggests some personality dimensions may be universally generalizable. Specific to this study, there is evidence for the cross-cultural generality of negative affect as a psychological disposition. Using translations of English markers of this dimension, negative affect has been identified in Japan (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998) and the Philippines (Church, Katigbak, Reyes, & Jensen, 1997). Support for the personality traits consolidated in the Five Factor (of which Brief, in 1998, define neuroticism as synonymous with negative affect) has been found in samples from Japan (Bond, Nakazato, & Shirishi, 1995), Taiwan (Yang & Bond, 1990), and Hong Kong (Yik & Bond, 1993). However, meta-analytic studies conducted by Salgado (1998) suggest that of the personality traits in the Five Factor Model, only Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness, not Negative Affect, were valid predictors of job related behavior in all countries in all European Community countries.

Locus of Control as a measure of psychological disposition does appear to be influenced by culture. Smith, Tompenaars, and Dugan (1995) concluded that there is evidence from three separate large-scale studies that substantial amounts of between-country variance on Rotter's Locus of Control scale is interpretable in terms of more broadly drawn dimensions of culture. In general, other studies tend to report that individuals from more collective or traditional cultures exhibit greater propensity to believe in external influences controlling their lives than do individual from individualistic cultures (Church & Lonner, 1998).

Procedural justice appears to be a concept that maintains a high degree of cross-cultural uniformity. Two studies by Lind, Tyler, and Huo (1997) involving participants from the U.S., Germany, Hong Kong, and Japan concluded that the concept of procedural justice contains a great deal more uniformity than differences. They reported that even where differences did occur

across cultures, such differences were more a question of degree or a question of slightly different manifestations of the same basic processes than differences of kind.

So, the evidence is mixed regarding the stability of the variables used in this study across differing cultures. The viability of negative affect across cultures is still not determined. The effect of Locus of Control on the relationship between perceptions of psychological contract violation and job satisfaction and/or acceptance of change would appear to be highly influenced by culture. However, there is reason to believe that perception of organizational justice will remain stable across cultures and situations. Further, Church & Lonner (1998) note that little research has addressed whether personality dimensions, even if they are stable across cultures, have the same relationships with other variables of interest. E.g., the relationships we observed among the dispositional variables on which we focused may be very different for Korean or German employees of downsized British or Japanese firms.

In the future, it may be useful to investigate similar relationships in other cultures. We might also look more closely at the personality profiles of those who perceived management's downsizing implementation strategies to be procedurally just. This may be an effective screening device for either determining who survives, or who may need additional support in order to blossom or cope with the stresses of downsizing. In the mean time, with renewed interest in the influence of personality characteristics, this study raises an important question about how preexisting psychological dispositions might influence the reactions of employees to management's attempt at procedural justice during the implementation and aftermath of a downsizing.

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Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Job Satisfaction	165	4.79	1.68							
2 Acceptance of Change	157	2.94	1.22	.562***						
3 Psychological Contract Violation (Composite Scale Converted to Z)	161	.03	1.28	-.429***	-.265***					
4 Procedural Justice	159	2.61	1.08	.462***	.599***	-.235**				
5 Generalized Self-Esteem	171	4.10	.71	.376***	.359***	-.205**	.263***			
6 Org-Based Self-Esteem	1.70	3.89	.87	.456***	.491***	-.277***	.580***			
7 Negative Affect	160	2.94	.91	-.579***	-.538***	.340***	-.422***	-.458***		
8 Locus of Control	171	3.84	.92	.425***	.438***	-.189**	.296***	.684***	.510***	-.337***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

