

## Constraints, Conflict and Counterproductive Work Behavior: Organizational Cynicism as a Mediator

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Deviant workplace behavior is a pertinent issue as its detrimental impacts include financial losses for organizations. This study investigated the relationship between job stressors, organizational constraints (OC), interpersonal conflict (IC), organizational cynicism, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). An online questionnaire was used to gather data from 141 Malaysians employed full-time (63 males, 78 females) aged between 19 and 62 years ( $M = 37.4$ ;  $SD = 12.7$ ) recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Data was analyzed on IBM SPSS Statistics 25 through regression analysis. Mediation was examined using Baron and Kenny's (1986) method. Results showed that both OC ( $\beta = .51$ ) and IC ( $\beta = .39$ ) were significant predictors of CWB. OC predicted organizational cynicism ( $\beta = .69$ ), which in turn predicted CWB ( $\beta = .49$ ). Organizational cynicism partially mediated OC and CWB relationship. Findings have practical implications in mitigating the negative impacts of CWB. Future studies can explore other mediating variables to further build upon the stressor-strain framework in the workplace.

**Keywords:** organizational constraints, interpersonal conflict, organizational cynicism, counterproductive work behavior

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is workplace deviance that threatens the well-being of an organization and/or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). CWB encompasses abuse, withdrawal, theft, production deviance, and sabotage (Spector et al., 2006). Employee theft contributed to 23.3% of the shrinkage in the retail industry in Malaysia, equivalent to a loss of about USD 63.1 million (The Center for Retail Research, 2011, as cited in Moorthy et al., 2015). In a Malaysian economic crime and fraud survey, 24% of respondents reported that their organization lost at least a million USD due to fraud, with 33% of perpetrators being their own employees (PwC, 2020). These reports highlight the need to study the antecedents of CWB to manage its detrimental impacts. This study operationally defined CWB as how often an employee engages in deviant behavior at work, which includes the five

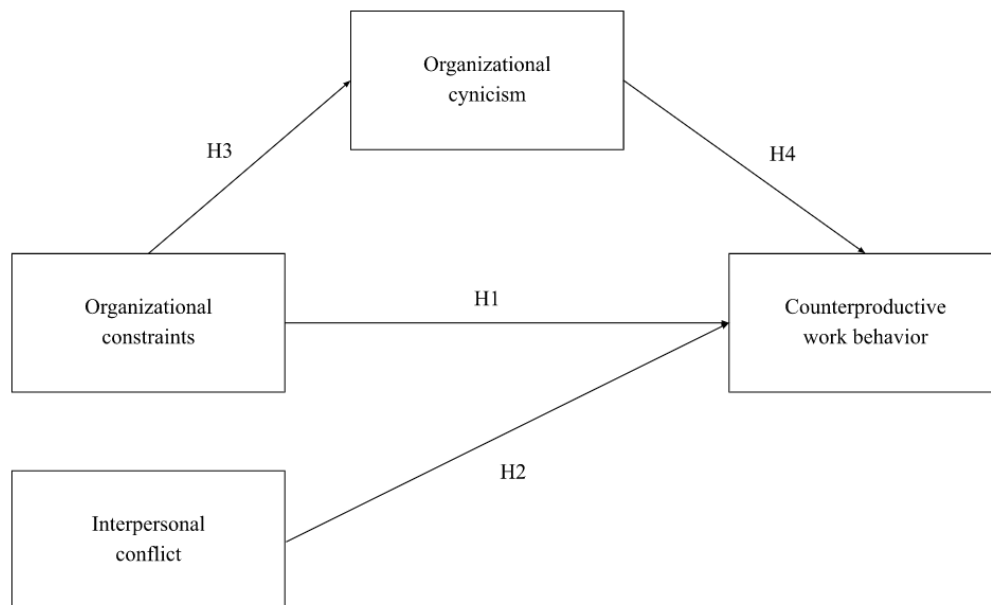
constructs described by Spector et al. (2006).

Stress is a pattern of responses towards stimuli which disrupts physiological, cognitive, emotional, or behavioral balance and exceeds a person's coping ability (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This study investigated the relationship between OC, IC, and CWB within the stressor-strain framework. OC and IC are commonly categorized as job stressors associated with negative health outcomes (LePine et al., 2005; Jackson & Frame, 2018). Job stress associated with negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, results in job strains, such as CWB (Spector, 1998).

According to the social exchange theory, relationships are based on maximizing rewards and minimizing costs (Cook et al.,

2013). Based on the concept of reciprocity in the social exchange theory, if an organization treats an employee poorly, the employee will reciprocate that treatment towards the organization. The stress and difficulties experienced from OC may be viewed as a high cost, without sufficient benefits to outweigh the cost. Hence, employees engage in negative attitudes and behaviors towards the organization. Employees who experience OC tend to be cynical towards their organization (Bakker

et al., 2003; Kasalak & Bilgin Aksu, 2014; Walid et al., 2019). This attitude may serve as a coping mechanism towards work constraints. They hold negative attitudes and blame the organization and its leaders to avoid personal responsibility for factors beyond their control (Reichers et al., 1997). In turn, these attitudes can manifest as CWB (Li & Chen, 2018; Rayan et al., 2018; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2012). Please refer to Figure 1 for the conceptual model.



*Figure 1* The Conceptual Model

Peters and O’Connor (1980) conceptualized OC as situational factors beyond employees’ control that hinder successful task completion, such as having information, supplies, and budgetary support. Spector and Jex (1998) classified OC as a job stressor because it is associated with the physical symptoms of stress and affective strains. Experiencing OC while striving to perform can lead to anger, frustration and anxiety over failure and underperformance (Pindek & Spector, 2016b). In this study, OC was operationally defined as how often an employee experiences difficulties out of their control in performing their job. Studies have reported that OC predicts CWB (Ehigie & Hameed, 2020; Meier & Spector, 2013).

These authors suggest that employees engage in CWB because they are unable to manage negative emotions associated with experienced OC. Contrastingly, Yao (2021) found that OC is related to lower CWB possibly because engaging in CWB may result in more stressful situations such as being reprimanded for their actions. Thus, this study hypothesized:

H1: OC significantly positively predicts CWB.

IC is defined as overt or covert conflicts that can range from minor disagreements to physical assault (Spector & Jex, 1998). Relationships at any organizational level are significant sources of stress and

frustration (Harris et al., 2011). This study operationally defined IC as the frequency workers experience disputes with others in their organization. Several studies have reported positive associations between IC and CWB (Hasanati et al., 2018; Kundi & Badar, 2021; Zhou et al., 2014). Those who experience IC seek compensation for their poor treatment by engaging in negative behaviors at the workplace (Low et al., 2019). A Malaysian study found that IC was negatively associated with CWB in an organization undergoing restructuring, possibly because employees were careful to avoid retrenchment (Rahim et al., 2018). Further research is needed to clarify the relationship between IC and CWB. Thus, this study hypothesized:

H2: IC significantly positively predicts CWB.

Dean et al. (1998) described organizational cynicism as negative beliefs, affect, and behaviors towards the organization. Cynical individuals have pessimistic perspectives on their organization's future actions (Dean et al., 1998). Cynicism about organizational change is employees' pessimistic outlook towards change in the organization and blaming others for the lack of successful change (Wanous et al., 2000). Organizational cynicism was operationally defined as how much an employee agrees with pessimistic statements about change in their organization. Studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between OC and organizational cynicism (Bakker et al., 2003; Kasalak & Bilgin Aksu, 2014; Walid et al., 2019). Low perceived support and constraints in terms of professional development and underdeveloped facilities are related to cynical attitudes (Kasalak & Bilgin Aksu, 2014). However, Brown et al. (2020) reported that pressure to perform with fewer constraints and difficult performance appraisal objectives may result in higher cynicism. Thus, this study hypothesized:

H3: OC significantly positively predicts organizational cynicism.

Studies also indicated a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and CWB (Li & Chen, 2018; Rayan et al., 2018; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2012). Pessimism associated with cynicism results in emotional exhaustion from the buildup of negative feelings, yielding negative behavioral outcomes (Shahzad & Mahmood, 2012). Similarly, Li and Chen (2018) explained this relationship using the social exchange theory whereby the negative attitudes lead to CWB. Cynicism was found to be associated with time theft (a form of CWB), which may be a method to deal with their cynical attitudes (Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). Thus, this study hypothesized:

H4: Organizational cynicism significantly positively predicts CWB.

Li and Chen (2018) reported that cynicism mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and CWB. Unfulfilled obligations of resource support—essentially OC—is one of the dimensions of PCB (Lester et al., 2002; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). A link between unfulfilled resource obligations from the organization, cynicism, and CWB was found (Li & Chen, 2018). Similarly, Bal (2020) found that cynicism mediated organizational support predicting CWB. Organizational support is negatively linked to constraints in terms of fairness, supervisor support, rewards, and work conditions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). These findings suggest that cynicism may play a mediating role in the OC and CWB relationship. Additionally, numerous studies reported a relationship between OC and organizational cynicism (Bakker et al., 2003; Kasalak & Bilgin Aksu, 2014; Walid et al., 2019) and organizational cynicism and CWB (Li & Chen, 2018; Rayan et al., 2018; Shahzad & Mahmood, 2012), further suggesting the possibility of organizational

cynicism as mediator. Thus, this study hypothesized:

H5: Organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between OC and CWB.

While there are studies on the relationships between OC, organizational cynicism and CWB, none integrated these into a mediation model. Understanding potential mediators is important in planning interventions to reduce CWB. Additional research into CWB can provide a theoretical integration of the causes of behaviors harming the organization (Bennett & Marasi, 2016). This study also aims to address the contradictions in literature on the relationship between OC and IC with CWB. Additionally, contextual limitations exist due to limited recent literature on job stressors and CWB in Malaysia. Individualists who emphasize hierarchy were more likely to engage in CWB than collectivists who emphasize equality, suggesting that cultural values may impact work behavior (Smithikrai, 2014). This highlights the importance of CWB research across different cultures. The current study will attempt to address these limitations and inconclusive findings.

## Method

### Participants

The minimum sample size suggested from a G\*Power analysis (Faul et al., 2009) was 141, with  $\alpha = .05$  and power  $(1 - \beta) = .95$ , and a medium effect size of  $\rho^2 = 0.13$ . A total of 159 responses were collected but 18 did not meet the inclusion criteria (Malaysian adult employed full-time). In the final analysis, 141 responses were included. The participants' ages ranged between 19 and 62 years old ( $M = 37.4$ ,  $SD = 12.7$ ). The participants identified as Malay (5.7%), Chinese (80.1%), Indian (12.8%), and Others (1.4%). The organizational tenure (OT) of participants ranged between less than a year to 36 years ( $M = 7.8$ ;  $SD = 8.5$ ) (See Table 1).

Table 1

### Demographic characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	63	44.7
Female	78	55.3
Ethnicity		
Malay	8	5.7
Chinese	113	80.1
Indian	18	12.8
Others	2	1.4

Note.  $N = 141$ . Participants were on average 37.4 years old ( $SD = 12.7$ ) and had an average tenure of 7.8 years ( $SD = 8.5$ ).

## Measures

### Organizational Constraints Scale (OCS)

OC was measured using the 11-item OCS (Spector & Jex, 1998). Participants rated how often they find it difficult to do their job on a scale of 1 (*less than once per month or never*) to 5 (*several times per day*). Sample items include "Organizational rules and procedures" and "Inadequate training". Higher scores indicate a higher level of constraints. The present study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93. This scale has shown nomological validity through strong correlations with role ambiguity and role conflict, and a moderate correlation with negative affectivity (Spector & Jex, 1998).

### Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (ICAWS)

IC was measured using the 4-item ICAWS (Spector & Jex, 1998). Participants rated how often they experience conflict from 1 (*less than once per month or never*) to 5 (*several times per day*). Sample items include "How often do other people yell at you at work?" and "How often are people rude to you at work?". Higher scores indicate that employees experience disagreement or are treated poorly more frequently. The present study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .81. This scale has demonstrated nomological validity through

a strong correlation with role conflict, as well as smaller correlations with role ambiguity and negative affectivity (Spector & Jex, 1998).

### ***Cynicism About Organizational Change Measure (CAOC)***

Organizational cynicism was measured using the 8-item CAOC (Wanous et al., 2000). Participants rated how much they agree with pessimistic statements on successful change efforts and statements blaming those responsible for organizational change on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include “Attempts to make things better around here will not produce good results” and “Plans for future improvement will not amount to much”. Higher scores indicate higher pessimism about successful change and a higher dispositional attribution to failure of change. The present study reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .96. The low correlation between CAOC and situational attribution indicated discriminant validity (Wanous et al., 2000).

### ***Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C)***

CWB was measured using the 10-item short form of the CWB-C (Spector et al., 2010). The items were rated from 1 (*never*) to 10 (*everyday*). Sample items include “Purposely wasted your employer’s materials/supplies” and “Came to work late without permission”. Higher scores indicate a higher frequency of engaging in CWB. The present study reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .79. The insignificant correlation between CWB-C and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist indicated the discriminant validity of these scales (Spector et al., 2010).

## **Procedure**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee. Data was collected through Google Forms, an online questionnaire. The 41-item questionnaire was estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. No compensation was provided for participation. A convenience sampling method was utilized by sharing the questionnaire link on the researcher’s social media platforms. Snowball sampling was implemented by asking participants to share the questionnaire with others. The questionnaire included a participant information sheet, consent question, demographic questions, and the four measures (OCS, ICAWS, CAOC, and CWB-C). A debriefing statement was provided after questionnaire completion.

## **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software. Normality of all variables (OC, IC, organizational cynicism, and CWB) were evaluated using Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, normal Q-Q plots, and histograms. Pearson’s correlation was used to test if the demographic variables (age, gender, OT) acted as confounds.

Simple linear regression was used to test if OC (H1), IC (H2), and organizational cynicism (H4) predicted CWB, and if OC predicted organizational cynicism (H3). If confounds were identified, hierarchical regression was used instead to control for the effects of the confounds. Mediation (H5) was tested using Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach of analyzing three regression equations. First, if OC predicts CWB. Second, if OC predicts organizational cynicism. Third, if both OC and organizational cynicism predict CWB. Simple linear regressions were used to test the first two equations, and standard multiple regression was used to test the third. If confounds were identified, hierarchical multiple regression was used

instead. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of the variables were tested before conducting a multiple regression analysis. Multicollinearity was tested to ensure low intercorrelation between variables (Hair et al., 2022). Mediation is established when the first two equations are significant and organizational cynicism significantly affects CWB in the third equation.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated that scores for OC ( $D(140) = .14, p < .001$ ), IC

( $D(140) = .27, p < .001$ ), organizational cynicism ( $D(140) = .12, p < .001$ ), and CWB ( $D(140) = .15, p < .001$ ) were not normally distributed. However, normal Q-Q plots suggested that the variables are approximately normally distributed. Multicollinearity does not exist as the predictors had Pearson's  $r$  values of less than .70 (See Table 2). Pearson's correlation analysis indicated that age and OT acted as confounds (See Table 2). Age and OT had a large positive correlation ( $r = .74$ ) while age and OC ( $r = -.24$ ), and OT and OC ( $r = -.27$ ) had small negative correlations. Hence, the effects of age and OT were controlled in H1 and H3 using hierarchical multiple regression.

Table 2  
Correlation coefficients of study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	—						
2. Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.21*	—					
3. OT	.74**	-.12	—				
4. OC	-.24**	-.05	-.27**	—			
5. IC	-.04	-.12	-.09	.61**	—		
6. CAOC	-.01	-.05	-.06	.65**	.55**	—	
7. CWB	-.08	-.01	-.10	.50**	.39**	.49**	—

Note. OT = organizational tenure; OC = Organizational Constraints Scale scores; IC = Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale scores; CAOC = Cynicism About Organizational Change Measure scores; CWB = Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist scores.

<sup>a</sup> Gender was coded as 1 = Male, 2 = Female

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

### Hypothesis 1–4

Hierarchical regression was used to test if OC significantly predicted CWB while controlling for the effects of age and OT. In Step 1, age and OT did not significantly predict CWB,  $R^2 = .01, F(2, 138) = .76, p = .472$ . In Step 2, OC was entered to predict

CWB. The variance explained by the model as a whole was 25%,  $R^2 = .25, F(2, 138) = 15.25, p < .001$ . OC explained an additional 24% of variance in CWB after controlling for age and OT,  $R^2$  change = .24,  $F$  change (1, 137) = 43.78,  $p < .001$ . OC significantly predicted CWB ( $\beta = .51, p < .001$ ). Thus, H1 was supported (See Table 3).

Table 3  
Regression coefficients of OC predicting CWB

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Step 1							
Age	-.01	.05	-.02	-.12	.902	-.09	.08
OT	-.05	.07	-.09	-.74	.462	-.18	.08
Step 2							
Age	.01	.04	.03	.26	.796	-.07	.09
OT	.01	.06	.01	.12	.907	-.11	.12
OC	.23	.04	.51	6.61	<.001	.16	.30

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; OT = organizational tenure; OC = Organizational Constraints Scale scores.

Simple linear regression was used to examine the effect of IC on CWB. The overall regression was significant,  $R^2 = .15$ ,  $F(1, 139) = 24.65$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that IC contributes 15% of variance in CWB. IC significantly predicted CWB ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, H2 was supported (See Table 4). Simple linear regression was also used to examine the effect of organizational

cynicism on CWB. The overall regression was significant,  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(1, 139) = 42.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that organizational cynicism contributes 24% of variance in CWB. Organizational cynicism significantly predicted CWB ( $\beta = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, H4 was supported (See Table 4).

Table 4  
Regression coefficients of IC and organizational cynicism predicting CWB

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
IC	.69	.14	.39	5.00	<.001	.41	.96
CAOC	.25	.04	.49	6.54	<.001	.17	.32

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; IC = Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale scores; CAOC = Cynicism About Organizational Change Measure scores.

Hierarchical regression was used to test if OC predicted organizational cynicism while controlling for the effects of age and OT. In Step 1, age and OT did not significantly predict organizational cynicism,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(2, 138) = .34$ ,  $p = .715$ . In Step 2, OC was entered to predict organizational cynicism. The variance explained by the model as a whole was

44%,  $R^2 = .44$ ,  $F(2, 138) = 35.9$ ,  $p < .001$ . OC explained an additional 44% of variance in organizational cynicism after controlling for age and OT,  $R^2$  change = .44,  $F$  change (1, 137) = 106.5,  $p < .001$ . OC significantly predicted organizational cynicism ( $\beta = .69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, H3 was supported (See Table 5).

**Table 5**  
Regression coefficients of OC predicting organizational cynicism

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
<b>Step 1</b>							
Age	.05	.09	.06	.51	.612	-.13	.22
OT	-.11	.13	-.10	-.81	.419	-.37	.16
<b>Step 2</b>							
Age	.09	.07	-.12	1.30	.197	-.05	.22
OT	.04	.10	.04	.42	.674	-.16	.24
OC	.62	.06	.69	10.32	<.001	.50	.74

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; OC = Organizational Constraints Scale scores; CAOC = Cynicism About Organizational Change Measure scores.

**Mediation Testing**

The first (H1) and second (H3) regression equation were significant. The third regression equation was analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. In Step 1, age and OT did not significantly predict organizational cynicism,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(2, 138) = .76$ ,  $p = .472$ . In Step 2, OC and organizational cynicism were entered to predict CWB. The variance explained by the model as a whole was 29%,  $R^2 = .29$ ,

$F(2, 138) = 14.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . OC explained an additional 28% of variance in CWB after controlling for age and OT,  $R^2$  change = .28,  $F$  change (1, 137) = 27.33,  $p < .001$ . Partial mediation was established because OC ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and organizational cynicism ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p = .004$ ) each significantly predicted CWB. Therefore, H5 was supported (See Table 6). Refer to Figure 2 for the mediation model.

**Table 6**  
Hierarchical regression coefficients of OC and organizational cynicism predicting CWB

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
<b>Step 1</b>							
Age	-.01	.05	-.02	-.12	.902	-.09	.08
OT	-.05	.07	-.09	-.74	.462	-.18	.08
<b>Step 2</b>							
Age	-.00	.04	-.01	-.06	.955	-.08	.07
OT	.00	.06	.00	.02	.988	-.11	.12
OC	.15	.05	.32	3.17	.002**	.06	.24
CAOC	.14	.05	.28	2.91	.004**	.05	.24

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; OC = Organizational Constraints Scale scores; CAOC = Cynicism About Organizational Change Measure scores.

\*\* $p < .01$



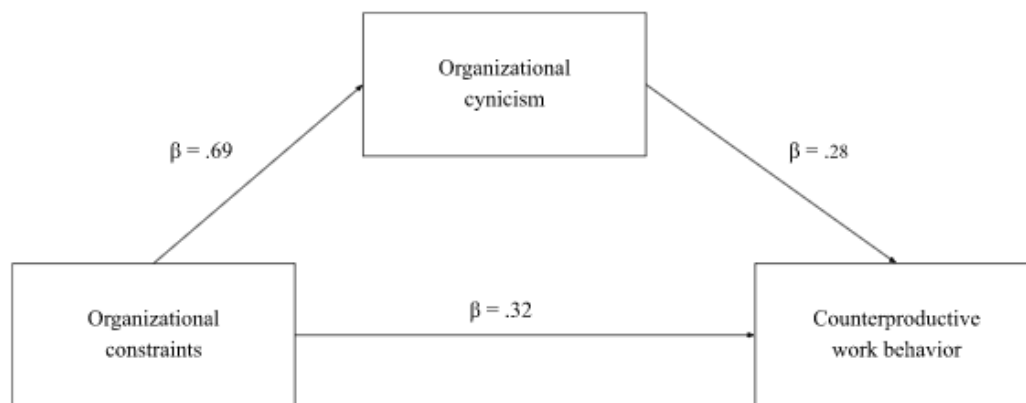


Figure 2 Mediation Model

### Discussion

This study aimed to address contrasting findings and contribute to the limited literature on work stress and CWB in the Malaysian context, specifically on the effect of OC and IC on CWB. Additionally, this study explored the potential mediating role of organizational cynicism in OC predicting CWB.

From the preliminary analysis, age and OT were found to be positively correlated. This was expected as those who were older were more likely to be in the workforce longer. A small significant negative correlation was found between OT and OC, and between age and OC. Employees who are more established at their jobs tend to perceive less things as constraints and can reduce the impacts of constraints as they have access to more coping resources (Pindek & Spector, 2016b). Older employees perceive fewer constraints possibly because they have adapted to their work constraints (Pindek & Spector, 2016a).

The results showed that OC significantly positively predicted CWB. OC is associated with negative emotions, such as anger, anxiousness and frustration, and behavioral strains, such as voluntary lateness (Liu et al., 2010). When employees are unable to manage these negative emotions, they will

engage in CWB (Ehigie & Hameed, 2020). Results from the current study implicated cross-cultural replicability of OC predicting CWB in the Malaysian context.

Higher IC was found to predict higher CWB. Employees with a hostile attributional style who experience IC may feel victimized resulting in them engaging in more CWB (An et al., 2016). Conflict with coworkers lead to negative emotions resulting in employees engaging in CWB (Kessler et al., 2013). Although CWB is wrongful, employees morally disengage in response to the negative emotions, thus rationalizing their CWB (Fida et al., 2015). Conflict, specifically abusive behaviors by supervisors, predicted CWB among a sample of nurses in Malaysia (Low et al., 2019). The present study found that these results were replicable in a non-specified job sample of Malaysian employees and found that IC in general predicted CWB.

OC was found to predict organizational cynicism. Constraints may have led employees to perceive that their organization has ignored their needs and start to question the organization's values. When employees perceive the organization to be acting with egocentric motives instead of the employees' best interest, the organization is viewed as less trustworthy (Mayer et al., 1995). As a result, employees

become doubtful and hold a cynical attitude towards their organization. Prior findings did not measure OC specifically as a construct in the context of predicting cynicism, but implicated OC as a part of other constructs such as perceived organizational support (Kasalak & Bilgin Aksu, 2014; Yalçın & Özbaş, 2021). The present study extended findings by demonstrating that OC was able to predict organizational cynicism.

Organizational cynicism was associated with CWB. Employees who experience organizational cynicism engage in CWB because they feel emotionally exhausted (Naseer et al., 2020). Emotional exhaustion diminishes their psychological resources, which results in exerting less effort in their work thus contributing to CWB (Naseer et al., 2020). Similarly, Shahzad and Mahmood (2012) reported that burnout mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and CWB. Results from this study demonstrated that findings from other countries were replicable in a Malaysian context.

Organizational cynicism partially mediated OC and CWB relationship. When faced with more constraints that impede their ability to perform work-related tasks, employees tend to have pessimistic outlooks towards their organization. Consequently, this can manifest through their behaviors as CWB. Partial mediation implies that in addition to organizational cynicism, OC may predict CWB through other factors. Prior studies reporting similar findings did not measure OC specifically, but implicated OC as a part of other constructs such as psychological contract breach (unfulfilled obligations) and organizational support (Bal, 2020; Li & Chen, 2018). These constructs encompass other factors besides OC. This study found that organizational cynicism also mediates specifically OC and CWB relationship.

## Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. First, self-report was used. Participants may have responded in a socially desirable manner for questions assessing negative attitudes and behaviors. Obtaining an additional data source, such as coworker and/or supervisor reports, can reduce validity concerns of self-report bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). However, the ethical concern of obtaining confidential employee data from other sources should be considered, such as obtaining consent and protecting their welfare (Resnik, 2016).

Second, non-probability sampling methods were used, thus limiting results generalizability. The sample may not represent the general population as it was obtained from the researcher's social circle which may be limited by factors such as geographic location. Future research may consider probability sampling techniques such as randomly selecting clusters of the population based on a criterion such as geographic location.

Third, job sectors were not compared. A study on Nigerian teachers and another study on Filipino nurses reported contrasting results for OC predicting CWB (Ehigie & Hameed, 2020; Yao, 2021). Meanwhile, a study in Malaysia on IC predicting CWB among nurses contradicted a similar study on a maritime-related organization's employees (Low et al., 2019; Rahim et al., 2018). The nature of the job or cultural differences may have caused these conflicting findings and are worth exploring in future research.

## Implications

Findings from this study have practical implications for managing CWB in Malaysia. Effective strategies to manage deviant workplace behavior are important to reduce detrimental impacts on organizations. OC and IC predict CWB,

thus suggesting that interventions should target these stressors. Though OC may appear difficult to address due to limited resources, it should be noted that constraints are not limited to these. Constraints in terms of organizational rules, regulations and procedures can be addressed more easily through improved organizational practices and leadership (Pindek et al., 2019). Mediation results suggest that organizational cynicism can also be targeted. IC and organizational cynicism can be addressed through interventions such as workgroup-level discussions about civility (Leiter et al., 2011; Nicholson et al., 2014). Future studies can evaluate the efficacy of such programs.

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