

A review of how leadership justice, and job satisfaction interact to shape counterproductive work behavior

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Abstract

Purpose: This review explores the interplay between leadership, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in organizational settings.

Research Methodology: The analysis synthesizes findings from various studies, focusing on the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory and its implications for job satisfaction and CWB. A total of 14 articles were reviewed: four focused on LMX's impact on job satisfaction and CWB, five examined the role of organizational justice in shaping these variables, and five investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction in the LMX-CWB relationship.

Results: The review highlights that positive LMX relationships, characterized by trust, respect, and mutual commitment, significantly enhance job satisfaction and reduce CWB. The findings underscore the importance of fostering positive LMX interactions and ensuring fairness in organizational processes to mitigate CWB.

Conclusions: The study concludes that Effective leadership and organizational justice are vital for promoting job satisfaction and minimizing counterproductive behaviors in the workplace. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating healthier and more productive work environments.

Limitations: One limitation of this review is that it primarily focuses on existing literature, which may not encompass all relevant studies or perspectives on the topic.

Contribution: This review contributes to the field of organizational behavior and management by providing a comprehensive understanding of how leadership and organizational justice influence employee attitudes and behaviors. This finding offers valuable insights for academics and practitioners aiming to address CWB and enhance workplace dynamics.

Keywords: Counterproductive Work Behavior, Job Satisfaction, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Leadership, Organizational Justice

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1. Introduction

A review of the interaction of leadership, justice, and job satisfaction in creating Counterproductive Work Behavior counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is defined as deliberate acts that cause harm or undermine the organization or its members. It is a major problem for businesses and organizations around the world (M. A. O. Ahmed, Zhang, Fouad, Mousa, & Nour, 2024). The accomplishments of the company, employee morale, and productivity can all be negatively affected by these actions, which include stealing, sabotage, and neglecting one's responsibilities (Jiatong et al., 2022). Thus, one of the

most important areas of organizational study is to comprehend the causes of CWB. Job satisfaction, organizational fairness beliefs, and leadership styles are important determinants of CWB that can either promote or inhibit this type of behavior ([Akinyele & Chen, 2024](#)).

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) idea in particular is frequently seen as a key factor in influencing the attitudes and actions of employees. According to LMX theory, the nature of the connection between leaders and their subordinates affects a number of outcomes, including CWB, organizational commitment, and work satisfaction ([A. K. Ahmed, Atta, El-Monshed, & Mohamed, 2024](#); [Nson, 2024](#)). Therefore, the probability of CWB can be decreased by leaders who build strong bonds based on mutual respect, trust, and obligation. [Zhu, Cai, and Jin \(2024\)](#) state that "counterproductive behaviors are less likely to be engaged in by employees who perceive high levels of support and fairness from their leaders." This viewpoint aligns with Social Exchange Theory ([Mishra, Mahapatra, & Sharma, 2023](#)), which posits that workers exhibit cooperative and productive actions in return for favorable treatment from their supervisors.

CWB is also significantly influenced by organizational justice or the perceived equity of organizational policies and procedures. Procedural justice is concerned with the fairness of procedures that result in awards and promotions, whereas distributive justice is concerned with the fairness of the results themselves. Conversely, the quality of interpersonal treatment that employees receive is the emphasis of interactional justice. According to ([Jantjies et al., 2024](#)), workers who believe they are being treated unfairly in these areas are more prone to use CWB as a form of retaliation. The conclusion that "when employees perceive injustice, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that harm the organization, such as withholding effort or sabotaging projects" is further supported by research conducted by [Chi, Vu, Nguyen, and Truong \(2023\)](#).

The link between leadership, justice, and CWB was also significantly mediated by job satisfaction, which is frequently seen as an emotional reaction to one's work. As stated by [Basaad, Bajaba, and Basahal \(2023\)](#), "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" is what is meant by job satisfaction. Employee satisfaction often results in higher levels of motivation, increased productivity, and a decreased likelihood of deviant conduct. Additionally, [Y. Chen, Ning, Yang, Feng, and Yang \(2018\)](#) contend that "because they are more in line with organizational goals, employees who are more satisfied with their jobs are less likely to participate in CWB." Consequently, job satisfaction serves as a buffer, reducing the detrimental consequences of perceived unfairness or subpar leadership on unproductive work practices.

Although much research has been conducted on the connections between leadership, organizational justice, job happiness, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB), a thorough synthesis of the ways in which these factors interact is still lacking. Counterproductive behaviors and employee attitudes are greatly influenced by leadership, especially Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Perceptions of fairness inside a company are known as organizational justice, and they have a significant impact on employee outcomes, such as CWB and work satisfaction. This literature review examines how CWB is shaped by the interaction of leadership, justice, and work satisfaction ([Vinh, Hien, & Do, 2022](#)).

The dyadic interactions between leaders and followers and their influence on organizational results are highlighted by the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, which also addresses leadership and counterproductive work behavior. High-quality LMX interactions have been associated with favorable outcomes, including reduced levels of CWB, increased work satisfaction, and organizational commitment. These relationships are marked by reciprocal trust, respect, and duty ([Agarwal 2021](#); [Nemr and Liu 2021](#); [Smith 2019](#)). According to [Li, Wang, Cai, and Chen \(2022\)](#), "counterproductive behaviors are less likely to be engaged in by employees who perceive high levels of support from their leaders." Conversely, poor LMX interactions, in which leaders fail to provide sufficient support or fairness, can make people feel resentful and frustrated, which, in turn, can raise CWB. As a result, leadership has a large impact on how likely it is that deviant behaviors will occur at work.

Organizational Justice and CWB Organizational justice is the fairness of organizational policies, processes, and interpersonal treatment, as seen by employees. According to [Vahdati, Saedi, and Moumeni \(2020\)](#), employees' attitudes and behaviors are greatly influenced by distributive justice, which deals with the fairness of results; procedural justice, which concentrates on the fairness of decision-making processes; and interactional justice, which refers to the treatment of others. [Brender-Ilan and Sheaffer \(2019\)](#) state that "when employees perceive injustice, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that harm the organization, such as withholding effort or sabotaging projects." Unfair treatment of any of these justice aspects causes irritation and discontent, which can lead to CWB as a coping strategy or form of revenge.

Job satisfaction is frequently seen as an affective reaction to one's job and work environment. Job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences," according to [Biełkowska and Tworek \(2025\)](#). Contented workers are more likely to integrate their own objectives with the organization and engage in prosocial actions, both of which can lower CWB. Regardless of leadership style or perceived justice, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between leadership and justice on the one hand and CWB. [Biełkowska and Tworek \(2025\)](#) emphasize that "employees with higher job satisfaction are less likely to engage in CWB, as they are more aligned with organizational goals."

The relationship between leadership, justice, job satisfaction, and CWB can be understood from a number of theoretical perspectives. For example, Social Exchange Theory ([H. Khan, Rehmat, Butt, Farooqi, & Asim, 2020](#); [Patrick, Chike, & Phina, 2025](#)) suggests that employees reduce the likelihood of CWB by reciprocating positive treatment from leaders and organizations through cooperative product behavior; the Equity Theory ([Butt & Yazdani, 2021](#)) links perceptions of fairness with job satisfaction, suggesting that employees who perceive fairness in treatment are more likely to be satisfied and less likely to engage in deviant behavior; the Affective Events Theory ([Ma, Jiang, Wang, & Xiong, 2020](#)) suggests that emotional reactions to work events influence attitudes and behaviors, supporting the role of job satisfaction as a key mediator in the relationship between leadership, justice, and CWB.

To provide practitioners with useful insights to reduce counterproductive work behavior in the workplace, this review aims to examine the complex relationships among leadership, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and counterproductive work behavior. This is accomplished by synthesizing recent research and theories.

This introduction does not present explicit hypotheses because it functions as a literature review-based discussion rather than an empirical research paper. In empirical studies, hypotheses are typically developed after establishing a theoretical foundation and identifying research gaps. However, the current text serves a different purpose—it synthesizes existing research on leadership, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) without proposing new testable relationships. As this is a review rather than an experimental or survey-based study, hypotheses are unnecessary at this stage. Instead, the focus is on integrating prior findings and theoretical perspectives, such as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Equity Theory, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact.

Additionally, the introduction aims to highlight research gaps and set the stage for future studies rather than present new empirical claims. While it outlines key relationships—such as how leadership and justice influence CWB through job satisfaction—it does not posit directional hypotheses because its primary objective is to summarize and critique the existing literature. This approach aligns with conventional practices in systematic and narrative literature reviews, which typically omit hypotheses in favor of synthesizing prior research. Hypotheses are more commonly found in primary research articles, in which the authors test specific predictions using quantitative or qualitative methods.

If this review were followed by an original empirical study, hypotheses could be introduced in a dedicated section (e.g., "Research Model and Hypotheses Development"). For instance, future research might propose hypotheses such as: High-quality LMX relationships negatively influence CWB, or Job

satisfaction mediates the effect of organizational justice on CWB. However, in the current context, the absence of hypotheses is justified, as the text serves as a theoretical foundation for further investigation rather than a hypothesis-driven analysis. By consolidating existing knowledge, this review provides a framework for future studies to build upon, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying counterproductive work behavior.

This study systematically examines the complex interplay between leadership styles (particularly Leader-Member Exchange), organizational justice perceptions, and job satisfaction as determinants of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) in organizational settings. This research aims to (1) establish theoretical linkages between these constructs, (2) empirically validate the mediating mechanism of job satisfaction, (3) reconcile conflicting findings from prior studies through a comprehensive literature synthesis, and (4) develop evidence-based interventions for organizational practitioners to effectively mitigate CWB. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, including Social Exchange Theory and Affective Events Theory, this investigation seeks to advance the current understanding of the psychological processes underlying workplace deviance while providing actionable insights for human resource management. The study focuses specifically on peer-reviewed empirical research published between 2015-2025 to ensure contemporary relevance to modern work environments.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This review employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on synthesizing the existing literature to explore the relationships among leadership, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Qualitative methods are grounded in the philosophy of interpretivism, allowing for an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena through the analysis of various studies and theoretical frameworks ([An, Meier, Ladenburg, & Westergård-Nielsen, 2020](#); [Morande & Marzullo, 2019](#)). This review aims to identify patterns, relationships, and effects among the variables of interest, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact within organizational contexts.

2.2 Data Collection Technique

Data collection for this review was conducted through a comprehensive literature search using academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate. The search terms included "Leader-Member Exchange," "job satisfaction," "organizational justice," and "counterproductive work behavior." The selected articles were analyzed to extract relevant findings and insights related to the research questions ([Chen, Ding, & Li, 2021](#); [Mahmod, 2022](#)).

2.3 Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis method used in this review was thematic analysis, which involved identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within the selected literature. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how leadership and organizational justice influence job satisfaction and CWB. The analysis focused on synthesizing the findings from the reviewed articles to draw conclusions about the relationships among the variables. The review highlights key themes, such as the importance of positive LMX relationships and the role of organizational justice in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors ([Hassanein, Mohammadi, & Zargar, 2025](#)).

2.4 Inclusion Criteria

The search was modified to include specific criteria where the variables LMX, job satisfaction, and CWB must be present in the abstract and summary text of the articles, and should be published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals and in English. Following this refinement, the search yielded 42 articles, of which only 14 were deemed relevant to the research objectives ([Omar and Ahmad 2020](#)).

This study employed the following criteria to collect data

1. Meta-Analysis Selection The selection was made from the 14 relevant studies, categorized as follows
 - a. Impact of LMX 4 articles focused on the impact of LMX on job satisfaction and CWB

- b. Role of Organizational Justice 5 articles examined the role of organizational justice in shaping job satisfaction and CWB
 - c. Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction 5 articles investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between LMX and CWB
2. Definitions Compilation Among the 14 articles, this study compiled definitions and insights related to LMX, job satisfaction, and CWB
3. Systematic Literature Review The systematic literature review investigated the 14 related articles concerning the interactions among LMX, job satisfaction, and CWB, whether they were found in conjunction with each other or connected to other elements in a relationship

The research methodology based on this framework is illustrated in Fig. 1. Notably, the concepts of LMX status and organizational justice indicate their roles in the investigation as independent, dependent, mediator, or moderator. Additionally, leadership style encompasses various types, such as transformational, transactional, authentic leadership, or other categories mentioned in the analysis (Page & Mgwanya, 2023).

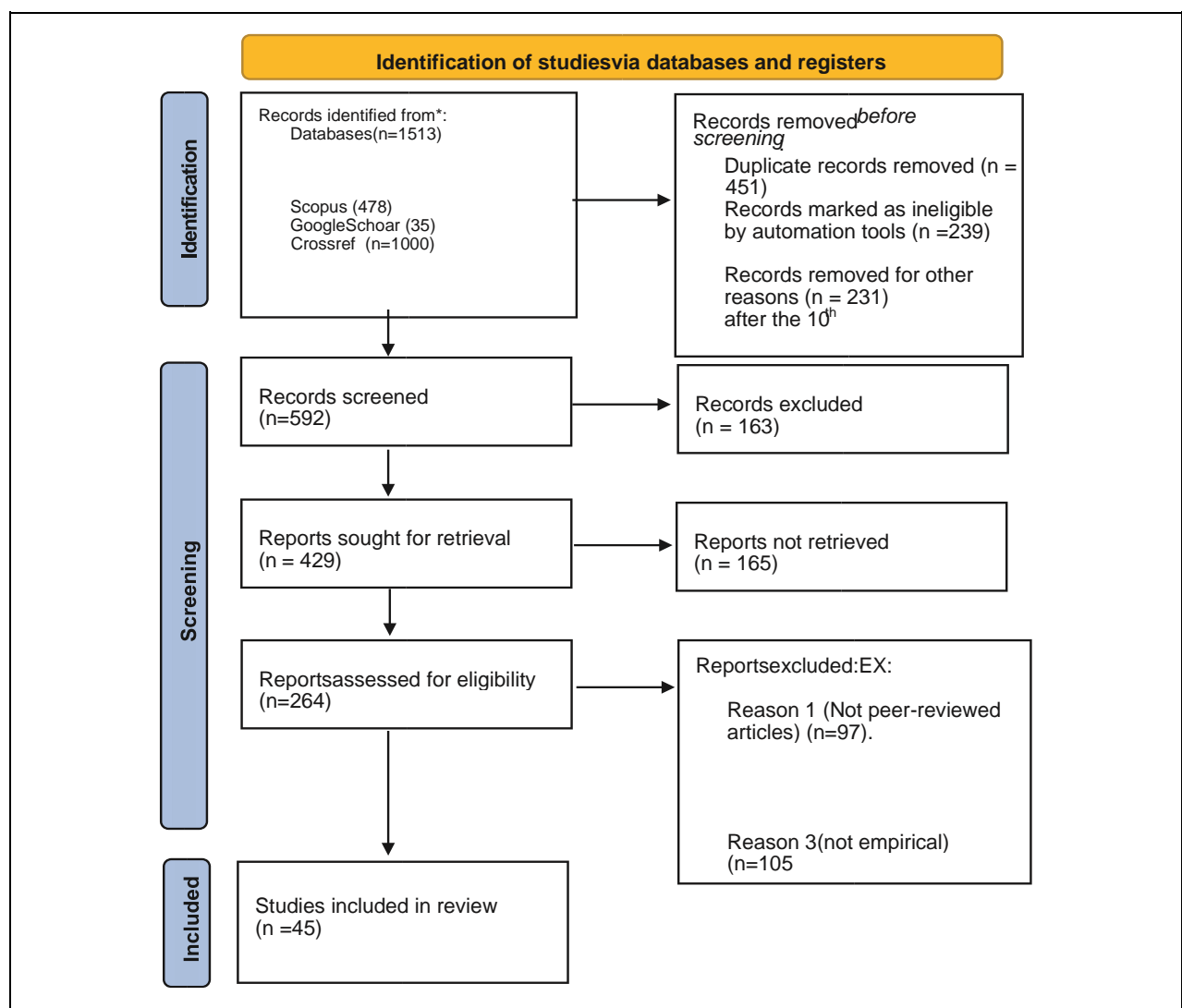


Figure 1. The research model

Table 1. Distribution Search Terms based on Scopus, Google Scholar and Crosref

| Search terms | Source | Papers | Cites | Cites/year | h | g |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------|----|-----|
| Job satisfaction, justice from 2015-2025 | Scopus | 200 | 13035 | 1303.50 | 54 | 105 |
| Job satisfaction, leader-member | Scopus | 200 | 5817 | 581.70 | 37 | 69 |

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|--|----------------|------|------|--------|----|----|
| Counterproductive work behavior | Scopus | 74 | 1599 | 159.90 | 20 | 39 |
| CWB, LMX, CWB, Justice | Scopus | 4 | 14 | 2.80 | 2 | 3 |
| Job satisfaction and Leader-member exchange and Counterproductive work behavior, Organizational justice and Job satisfaction and CWB, LMX and CWB and Justice. | Google Scholar | 35 | 4280 | 535.00 | 12 | 35 |
| Job satisfaction and Leader-member exchange and Counterproductive work behavior, Organizational justice and Job satisfaction and CWB, LMX and CWB and Justice | Crossref | 1000 | 3028 | 302.80 | 25 | 43 |

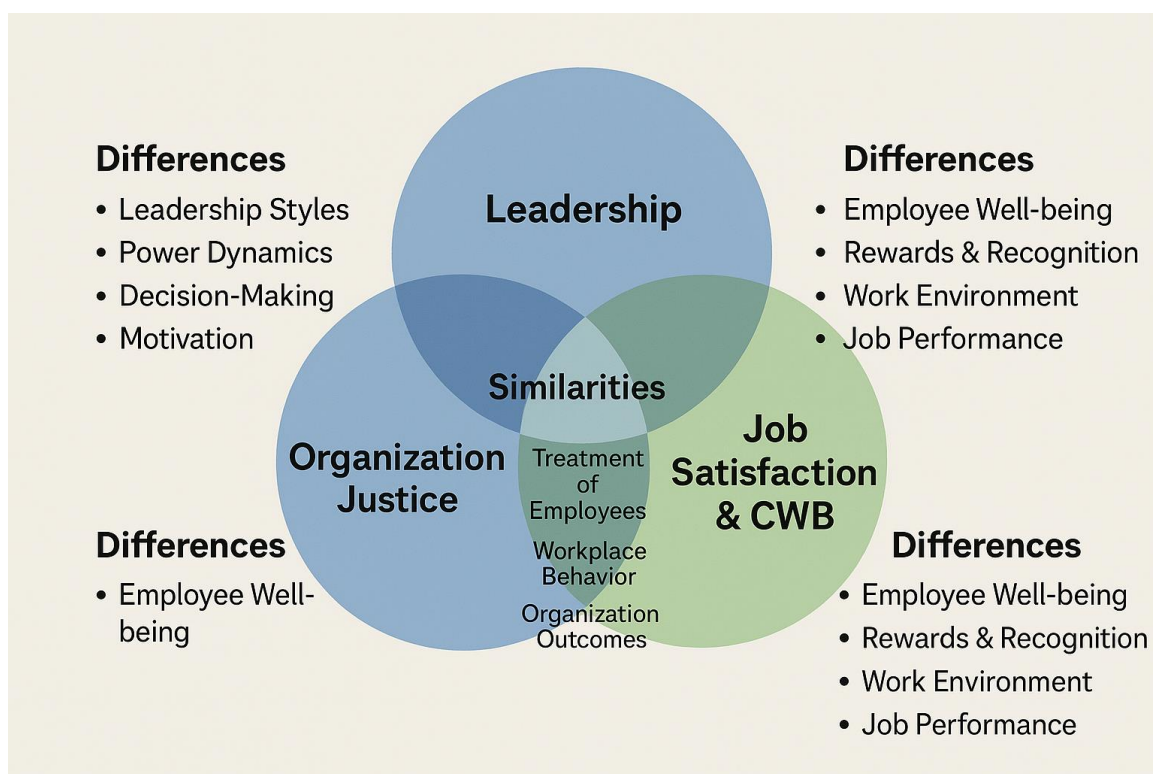


Figure 2. Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Organization Justice & CWB: Dissimilarities and Similarities

RQ1: In organizational contexts, what is the impact of leader-member exchange (LMX) on unproductive work behavior and job satisfaction?

The effect of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) on counterproductive work behavior and job satisfaction is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Impact of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) on job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior.

| The Author (s) | Title | Year | Publisher (DOI) | Explanation |
|----------------|---------------------------|------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Shkoler, O | Are Positive and Negative | 2021 | <i>Amfiteatru Economic</i> , 240(258), 176. https://doi.org/10.24818/EA/2021/56/240%0A | This study shows that LMX quality |

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| | Organizational Justice Conditioned by Leader-Member Exchange? | | | plays a crucial moderating role in determining how employees react to organizational justice, thereby confirming the idea that the leader's actions have a significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors |
| Siswanti, Y. and Tjahjono, H.K. | Cross level analysis of organizational justice climate to counterproductive work behavior: Leader-member exchange as mediation | 2020 | <i>Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy</i> , 11(11), 85-94 | They suggesting that LMX mediates the relationship between organizational justice and CWB. The study shows that when employees feel by their leaders (high-quality LMX), they are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors, which can harm the overall work environment and productivity, |
| Oliveira, L.B., Moreno, V., Goncales, R.C., | Individual and situational antecedents of counterproductive work behaviors. | 2020 | <i>BAR - Brazilian Administration Review</i> , 17(3), 1-21. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1807-7692bar2020190126 | Investigates the individual and situational factors that contribute to counterproductive work behavior, suggesting that LMX can influence such behaviors. |
| Kang SM, Pahng PH, Kang YJ | When team members retaliate: The effect of LMX differentiation on team CWB. | 2023 | <i>Acta Psychologica</i> , 241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.104090 | Analyzes how differentiation in LMX within teams affects counterproductive work behavior (CWB), particularly how unequal leader- |

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| | | | | member relationships contribute to retaliation and negative behaviors. |
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The aforementioned research findings underscore the critical role that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) plays in determining both job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). LMX, as defined by (Page & Mgwenya, 2023), asserts that the quality of the relationship between a leader and their subordinate influences a wide range of organizational outcomes, including employee behavior and satisfaction. The studies presented support the notion that high-quality LMX generally correlates with lower counterproductive behaviors and higher job satisfaction, whereas low-quality LMX can worsen these results.

According to [Lee and Jensen \(2014\)](#), LMX influences not only job satisfaction but also how employees perceive organizational justice. While low LMX can lead to feelings of injustice or inequality, which can directly result in negative behaviors such as retaliation or disengagement from work, high-quality LMX frequently fosters a sense of fairness and trust, increasing job satisfaction and lowering the likelihood of counterproductive work behaviors ([Muthuswamy & Varshika, 2023](#)). The study shows that LMX quality plays a crucial moderating role in determining how employees react to organizational justice, thereby confirming the idea that leaders' actions have a significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors.

[Shibru and Darshan \(2011\)](#) in her paper suggest that LMX mediates the relationship between organizational justice and CWB. The study shows that when employees feel that they are treated fairly by their leaders (high-quality LMX), they are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors, which can harm the overall work environment and productivity. Conversely, poor LMX results in feelings of neglect or unfair treatment, leading to higher CWB. This finding aligns with the Social Exchange Theory ([Nemteanu & Dabija, 2021](#)), which suggests that employees reciprocate the treatment they receive from their leaders; good treatment encourages positive behavior, while negative treatment fosters retaliation and harmful behaviors. The study emphasizes that the dynamics within leader-member interactions shape how employers express frustration or dissatisfaction in the workplace. High-quality LMX is associated with fewer instances of CWB, as employees are more likely to engage in constructive behaviors when they feel supported and valued by their leaders. Conversely, poor LMX increases the risk of negative behaviors such as aggression or withdrawal, as employees feel disconnected from their organization and leadership ([Mencil, Wefald, & van Ittersum, 2016](#)).

A critical nuance is introduced by [Rizani, Widianti, Kurniaty, Shaddiq, and Yahya \(2022\)](#), who highlight the impact of LMX differentiation—the variation in the quality of LMX between different team members. The study demonstrates that when LMX differentiation is high, with some team members enjoying high-quality LMX while others are treated poorly, team cohesion is undermined and CWB increases among disadvantaged employees. This finding is consistent with Resource Dependency Theory ([Tziner & Persoff, 2024](#)), which suggests that employees in lower-quality relationships with leaders may feel alienated or helpless, contributing to a sense of injustice that can manifest as CWB. Kang's study emphasized that LMX differentiation, rather than just LMX quality, is vital in determining the prevalence of CWB within teams ([Premru, Černe, & Buch, 2023](#)).

When combined, these studies offer a thorough understanding of how LMX affects job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior. Theories such as Resource Dependency Theory and Social Exchange Theory offer a strong framework for comprehending the reciprocal nature of leader-member interactions; high-quality LMX minimizes CWB by fostering an environment of fairness and trust, while low-quality LMX increases the likelihood of negative outcomes. Moreover, LMX differentiation adds complexity, as differences in how leaders are treated within teams can worsen CWB ([Mehmood, Malik, Nadarajah, & Saood Akhtar, 2023](#)).

To create a more productive and harmonious work environment, it is crucial to minimize LMX differentiation and cultivate high-quality leader-member relationships. These findings are especially significant for managers and organizations seeking to increase employee satisfaction and decrease undesirable behaviors ([Shen and Lei, 2022](#)).

RQ2: How do counterproductive work practices and job satisfaction relate to organizational justice?

Table 3. How Organizational Justice influences Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) and Job Satisfaction

| The Author (s) | Title | Year | Publisher | Explanation |
|---------------------|---|------|---|---|
| Moreto, W.D. | 'It's in my blood now': The satisfaction of rangers working in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda. | 2016 | <i>ORYX</i> , 50(4), 655-663 | Explores how fairness and organizational justice perceptions among rangers impact their job satisfaction, emphasizing the significance of justice in non-traditional settings. |
| Douglas ,P.S. et al | 2019 ACC Health Policy Statement on Cardiologist Compensation and Opportunity Equity. | 2019 | <i>Journal of the American College of Cardiology</i> , 74(15), 1947-1965. | Investigates how organizational justice regarding compensation and opportunity equity influences job satisfaction among cardiologists, demonstrating the impact of fairness in medical professions. |
| Zhu, X | A Causal model of Thriving at work in Chinese nurse | 2021 | <i>International Nursing Review</i> , 68(4), 444-452. | Examines the role of organizational justice in thriving and job satisfaction among nurses, showing how perceptions of fairness contribute to positive work outcomes. |
| Yamazaki, Y | A Cross-National Study of Fairness in Asia: How Perceptions of a Lack-of-Group Bias and Transparency in the Performance Evaluation System Relate to Job Satisfaction. | 2016 | <i>Human Resource Management</i> , 55(6), 1059-1077 | Investigates how transparency and fairness in performance evaluations affect job satisfaction across different cultures in Asia, showing that justice perceptions reduce negative work behaviors. |

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| Kim, T.Y. | A Dynamic Approach to Fairness: Effects of Temporal Changes of Fairness Perceptions on Job Attitudes. | 2015 | <i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i> , 30(1), 163-175. | Explores the dynamic nature of fairness perceptions and their effect on job satisfaction, illustrating how changes in perceived fairness can directly influence job attitudes and behaviors. |
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The aforementioned findings provide strong evidence that organizational justice is a key factor in determining job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and are consistent with several important theoretical frameworks that highlight the importance of equity and fairness in influencing employee attitudes and behaviors in the workplace ([Milosevic, Maric, & Lončar, 2020](#)).

Organizational Fairness and Workplace Contentment

Workers' perceptions of fairness in the workplace or organizational justice have long been seen as a key factor in determining job satisfaction. Theories such as the Distributive Justice Theory ([Morf & Bakker, 2024](#)) and Procedural Justice Theory ([Hattab, Wirawan, Salam, Daswati, & Niswaty, 2022](#)) emphasize that workers' satisfaction is largely influenced by how they perceive fairness in the organization's resource distribution and decision-making processes. The results of the aforementioned studies support this theory by demonstrating that workers who perceive high levels of fairness through equitable compensation ([Islam, Ahmed, Ali, Ahmer, & Usman, 2022](#)) and transparent performance evaluations ([Ahtisham, ul Haq, Ahmed, & Khalid, 2023](#)) report higher job satisfaction.

According to [Rafia and Achmad Sudiro \(2020\)](#), cross-national study on fairness in performance evaluations, for instance, “transparent, unbiased, and fair evaluation processes lead to increased job satisfaction because employees feel valued and respected.” This is in line with [Carmona-Cobo, Garrosa, and Lopez-Zafra's \(2021\)](#) work on procedural justice, which posits that employees are more likely to feel satisfied and committed to the organization when they believe they have been treated fairly in the decision-making processes.

Furthermore, [Gan and Voon's \(2021\)](#) research on Chinese nurses shows that fairness in organizational practices is associated with thriving and job satisfaction, which is consistent with the Social Exchange Theory ([Zheng, Wu, Chen, & Lin, 2017](#)), which holds that favorable outcomes, such as improved job satisfaction and performance, result when employees reciprocate fair treatment from businesses.

Mitigating counterproductive work behavior, such as absenteeism, sabotage, or organizational deviance, also requires organizational justice. According to Affective Events Theory ([Dung & Hai, 2020](#)), employees' emotional responses to perceived fairness or unfairness in the workplace impact their subsequent behaviors, including both positive and negative actions. The findings confirm that employees are more likely to engage in CWB when they perceive injustice or inequality such as biased treatment or unfair compensation systems.

In line with [Ruiz-Palomino, Morales-Sánchez, and Martínez-Cañas \(2021\)](#) research, which found that unfair treatment in organizations is strongly linked to CWB, [Carpenter, Whitman, and Amrhein \(2021\)](#) examines the job satisfaction of rangers working in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park, where perceptions of fairness directly influenced both their behavior and their level of satisfaction. When they felt that their treatment was unfair, their job satisfaction was lower, which likely contributed to negative attitudes and behaviors, such as disengagement or dissatisfaction. Employees may engage in CWB as a form of retaliation when they feel that they are being treated unfairly or are excluded from decision-making processes.

The study also supports Cognitive Appraisal Theory ([Shao et al., 2022](#)), which emphasizes that people evaluate situations as either threats or opportunities, with fairness judgments playing a significant role in these appraisals. [Zin, Ibrahim, Aman-Ullah, and Ibrahim \(2022\)](#) makes clear that fairness perceptions are dynamic and subject to change, which is important for understanding CWB. As employees' perceptions of fairness change over time, so does their behavior, and employees who experience a decline in perceived fairness are more likely to engage in negative behaviors, such as absenteeism or sabotage, because they feel less invested in the organization.

These findings highlight the significance of organizational justice in influencing both job satisfaction and counterproductive work behavior. According to Equity Theory ([S.-U.-R. Khan, Anjam, Abu Faiz, Khan, & Khan, 2020](#)), employees who believe they are treated fairly in relation to their peers are more satisfied and are less likely to engage in CWB, whereas those who believe they are treated unfairly may engage in negative behaviors as they try to "correct" the imbalance.

Ensuring that workers feel treated fairly, particularly in areas such as compensation ([Kishen, Syah, & Anindita, 2020](#)), performance evaluation ([Lin, Xian, Li, & Huang, 2020](#)), and general organizational policies ([Naseer, Raja, Syed, & Baig, 2021](#)), is crucial for increasing job satisfaction and productivity. Additionally, companies that promote fair practices are less likely to have high levels of CWB because workers are more likely to feel that their contributions are valued.

RQ3: Is the link between leadership (LMX) and counterproductive work behavior conduct mediated by Job Satisfaction?

Table 4. Shows how Job Satisfaction may operate as a mediator in the Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) and Leader-Member exchange (LMX)

| The Author (s) | Title | Year | Publisher | Explanation |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Donohue-Porter, P. | A Bridge to Leadership Communication Success: Impact of Leader-Member Exchange on Nursing Administrative Relationships. | 2019 | <i>Nurse Leader</i> , 17(6), 546-551 | This study explores the role of LMX in shaping administrative relationships and suggests that job satisfaction may mediate this relationship, improving outcomes like job performance. |
| Zhang, X. & Qian, J. | A continuous performance management approach: Effects of daily performance management behaviors on leader-member exchange, next-day job attitudes, and job performance. | 2025 | <i>Applied Psychology</i> , 74(1). | Investigates how LMX impacts job attitudes and job satisfaction, with implications for both job performance and counterproductive work behavior, supporting the idea of mediation. |
| Poetz, L.& Volmer, J | A diary study on the moderating role of leader-member exchange on the | 2022 | <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , 13. | Shows that LMX influences job satisfaction, which in turn can moderate the relationship between job characteristics and |

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|---------------------|---|------|--|---|
| | relationship between job characteristics, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. | | | emotional exhaustion, a form of CWB. |
| Lee, M. et al. | A Dyadic Approach to Examining the Emotional Intelligence-Work Outcome Relationship: The Mediating Role of LMX. | 2018 | <i>Organization Management Journal</i> , 15(1), 1-16. | Highlights how LMX mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and work outcomes, suggesting that job satisfaction could play a central role in reducing CWB. |
| Matthews, B. et al. | A dyadic of employee readiness and job satisfaction: Does there exist a theoretical precursor to the satisfaction-performance paradigm? | 2018 | <i>International Journal of Organizational Analysis</i> , 26(5), 842-857 | Investigates how job satisfaction mediates the relationship between employee readiness and performance, showing its potential to mitigate CWB through increased satisfaction. |

[Son, Phong, and Loan \(2020\)](#) introduced the idea of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), which holds that the quality of the relationship between leaders and subordinates has a significant impact on employees' job attitudes and behaviors. According to a number of studies ([Weiß & Süß, 2016](#)), high-quality LMX promotes positive work attitudes such as higher commitment, increased job satisfaction, and lower CWB. These findings are supported by the Social Exchange Theory ([Lestari, Watini, & Rose, 2024](#)), which postulates that positive and high-quality exchanges between leaders and employees lead to favorable outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction, while lowering negative behaviors, such as CWB. On the other hand, low-quality LMX may have negative outcomes such as disengagement, lower job satisfaction, and an increase in counterproductive behaviors.

According to Affective Events Theory ([Azmy, Risza, & Adhykusuma, 2022](#)), employees' attitudes and behaviors are greatly influenced by the emotional reactions that result from their interactions with leaders. [Nilasari, Nisfiannoor, and Devinta \(2021\)](#) discussed how LMX influences job satisfaction, which in turn affects employees' likelihood of engaging in CWB. The mediating role of job satisfaction in this relationship is consistent with Cognitive Appraisal Theory ([Luthfi, Norawati, Zulher, & Basem, 2022](#)), which emphasizes that employees' emotional reactions to organizational events, including fairness in leadership, can influence their subsequent behaviors. When employees believe their leaders treat them fairly, they are more likely to feel good, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of CWB.

Fairness in the workplace, both in terms of outcomes (distributive justice) and decision-making processes (procedural justice), is central to employees' job satisfaction, according to theories on organizational justice, especially the Distributive Justice Theory ([Abun, Nicolas, Apollo, Magallanes, & Encarnacion, 2021](#)) and Procedural Justice Theory ([Sinambela, Mardikaningsih, Arifin, & Ayu, 2020](#)). The studies reviewed (Rusdiyanto, 2021) show that employees' perceptions of fairness in their treatment by leaders and organizations directly influence their job satisfaction, supporting the notion that when employees believe their organization is just, they are more likely to be content with their jobs and less likely to participate in CWB in the workplace.

This view is further supported by [Ximenes, Supartha, Manuati Dewi, and Sintaasih's \(2019\)](#) research on procedural justice, which emphasizes that employees are more likely to engage in positive organizational behaviors and less likely to exhibit CWB when they believe that decision-making processes are fair. Organizational Justice Theory further supports the relationship between fairness and job satisfaction by arguing that when employees perceive justice in their interactions with leaders, they reciprocate with positive work behaviors (e.g., higher job satisfaction and reduced CWB).

The relationship between organizational justice and CWB is mediated by job satisfaction, which is influenced by leadership quality (LMX) and perceptions of justice. In addition, job satisfaction acts as a protective factor, reducing the likelihood of CWB. [Bilal et al. \(2021\)](#) examine the role that job satisfaction plays as a precursor to performance and suggest that when employees are happy in their jobs, they are less likely to engage in negative behaviors that can negatively impact organizational outcomes.

Job Characteristics Theory ([Meria, Hidayat, Santiago, Saukani, & Khotimah, 2024](#)) suggests that job satisfaction results from fulfilling job characteristics, and employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors. [Xie, Wang, and Lee \(2021\)](#) add that LMX positively influences job satisfaction, and employees who experience positive emotions as a result of good leadership are less likely to exhibit CWB. [Li et al. \(2022\)](#) demonstrated that job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between leadership (LMX) and CWB.

Furthermore, the Two-Factor Theory ([Vahdati et al., 2020](#)) posits that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by various factors, including hygiene factors (e.g., company policies, working conditions) and motivation factors (e.g., recognition, responsibility). Studies support this by demonstrating that when organizational justice and leadership provide strong motivational factors, employees tend to report higher job satisfaction and engage in fewer counterproductive behaviors; conversely, when these factors are absent or viewed as unjust, job dissatisfaction rises and CWB incidences subsequently follow.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 The Role of Leadership in Employee Engagement

Leadership is a fundamental element in shaping employee engagement and behavior within organizations. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory emphasizes the importance of the quality of relationships between leaders and their subordinates. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation. When leaders invest in building strong relationships with their team members, they create an environment in which employees feel valued and supported. This sense of belonging can significantly enhance job satisfaction, because employees are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their personal values.

Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships can lead to feelings of isolation and neglect among employees. When leaders fail to provide adequate support or recognition, employees may feel undervalued, which can result in disengagement and an increased likelihood of counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Employees who perceive their leaders as unsupportive may resort to negative behaviors such as absenteeism or sabotage as a means of coping with their dissatisfaction. Therefore, organizations must prioritize leadership development initiatives that focus on enhancing LMX quality to foster a more engaged and productive workforce.

3.2 Understanding Organizational Justice and Its Dimensions

Organizational justice is a critical factor that influences employee attitudes and behaviors. It encompasses three key dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes, such as pay and promotions. Employees who believe that they are receiving fair compensation for their contributions are more likely to experience job satisfaction. Procedural justice focuses on the fairness of the processes that lead to these outcomes. Employees are more likely to feel satisfied when they perceive that decision-making processes are transparent and equitable.

Interactional justice pertains to the quality of interpersonal treatment that employees receive from their leaders. When leaders communicate openly and treat employees with respect, they foster a sense of fairness and trust. This article highlights that perceptions of injustice in any of these dimensions can lead to negative outcomes, including increased CWB. Employees who feel treated unfairly may engage in counterproductive behaviors as a form of retaliation or express their dissatisfaction. Therefore, organizations must ensure that their policies and practices promote fairness across all dimensions of organizational justice.

3.3 The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction serves as a crucial mediator in the relationship between leadership, organizational justice, and CWB. The article emphasizes that satisfied employees are less likely to engage in CWB as they are more aligned with organizational goals. Job satisfaction is often viewed as an emotional response to one's work experiences, and it significantly influences employee behavior. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to exhibit high levels of motivation, commitment, and productivity. Organizations can enhance job satisfaction through various strategies. Providing opportunities for professional development, recognizing employee achievements, and fostering a positive work environment are effective ways to improve job satisfaction. When employees feel that their contributions are acknowledged and valued, they are more likely to be engaged in and committed to their work. This engagement acts as a protective factor against the negative effects of perceived unfairness and poor leadership, ultimately reducing the likelihood of CWB.

3.4 Implications for Organizational Practices

The insights derived from this study have significant implications for organizational practices. To mitigate CWB and enhance employee satisfaction, organizations should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize the importance of building strong leader-member relationships. Training leaders to communicate effectively, provide constructive feedback, and recognize employee contributions can foster a supportive work environment.

In addition, promoting organizational justice is essential. Organizations should implement fair policies and transparent decision-making processes to enhance employees' perceptions of justice. This can include regular assessments of compensation practices, performance evaluations, and opportunities for employee input in decision-making processes. When employees perceive fairness in these areas, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and fewer instances of CWB.

Furthermore, organizations should prioritize initiatives to improve job satisfaction. This can include employee recognition programs, career advancement opportunities, and the creation of a positive organizational culture that values employee well-being. By fostering an environment in which employees feel supported and valued, organizations can cultivate higher levels of job satisfaction, which, in turn, reduces the likelihood of counterproductive behaviors.

3.5 The Interconnectedness of Leadership, Justice, and Job Satisfaction

The interplay between leadership, organizational justice, and job satisfaction is complex and interconnected. Effective leadership practices can enhance perceptions of organizational justice, subsequently leading to higher job satisfaction. Conversely, when employees perceive injustice or experience poor leadership, their job satisfaction diminishes, increasing the likelihood of CWB. This cyclical relationship underscores the importance of addressing all three elements of organizational strategies.

Organizations must recognize that improving one area can have a positive ripple effect on others. For instance, by enhancing leadership quality through training and development, organizations can improve perceptions of justice among employees. This can lead to increased job satisfaction and reduced CWB. Therefore, a holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of these factors is essential for creating a healthy and productive work environment.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the intricate relationships among leadership, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). It emphasizes that effective leadership, particularly through Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, is crucial in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. High-quality LMX relationships foster trust and mutual respect, leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced CWB. Additionally, the dimensions of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—play a significant role in influencing employee perceptions and behaviors. Employees who perceive fairness in these areas are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, which serves as a protective factor against CWB.

The findings underscore the importance of fostering positive leader-member relationships and ensuring fairness in organizational practices to create a healthier and more productive work environment. Organizations should invest in leadership development programs that focus on enhancing the quality of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Training leaders to build strong relationships with their team members is essential, emphasizing skills such as effective communication, support, and recognition of employees' contributions.

The promotion of organizational justice is also critical. Organizations must establish fair policies and transparent decision-making processes. Regular assessments of compensation practices and performance evaluations should be conducted to ensure equity and fairness, which can significantly impact employee perceptions and behaviors.

Enhancing job satisfaction should be a priority for organizations. This can be achieved through initiatives such as employee recognition programs, opportunities for professional development, and fostering a positive organizational culture that values employees' contributions. When employees feel valued and supported, their job satisfaction increases, leading to greater engagement and productivity.

It is vital to foster open communication between leaders and employees. Encouraging dialogue can help address concerns related to fairness and support, leading to improved perceptions of justice and higher job satisfaction. Finally, organizations should regularly monitor and evaluate employee attitudes and behaviors through surveys and feedback mechanisms. This will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that leadership practices and organizational policies align with employee needs.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can create a supportive work environment that enhances employee satisfaction, reduces counterproductive behaviors, and ultimately leads to improved organizational performance.

5.2. Limitation

The review presented in this article has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis primarily focuses on existing literature, which may not encompass all relevant studies or perspectives on the interplay between leadership, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This limitation may result in a narrow understanding of the topic, as emerging research and diverse contexts may not be fully represented. Second, the review relies on qualitative descriptive methods, which, while providing in-depth insights, may lack the quantitative rigor that could strengthen the findings. Additionally, the reviewed studies may vary in their methodologies, sample sizes, and contexts, which could affect the generalizability of the conclusions drawn. Finally, the dynamic nature of organizational environments means that the relationships explored in this review may evolve over time, necessitating ongoing research to keep pace with changes in workplace dynamics.

5.3. Suggestion

To address the limitations identified in this review, future research should conduct comprehensive meta-analyses that incorporate a broader range of studies, including those from diverse cultural and organizational contexts. This would provide a more holistic understanding of how leadership,

organizational justice, job satisfaction, and CWB interact in different settings. Additionally, researchers should consider employing mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative data to enhance the robustness of their findings. Longitudinal studies could also be beneficial in examining how these relationships evolve over time, particularly in response to changes in leadership practices or organizational policies. Furthermore, exploring the impact of different leadership styles beyond LMX, such as transformational and servant leadership, could yield valuable insights into their effects on employee attitudes and behaviors.

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