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The way justice unleashes staff's compassion toward hotel guests

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# The way justice unleashes staff's compassion toward hotel guests

Justice  
unleashes  
staff's  
compassion

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to model staff reactions to a hotel based on the way they perceive hotel's treatment of customers. It suggests that employees are not motivated to help abused customers in the form of customer-oriented behaviors (COBs) until employees also feel that they are victims of abuse by the hotel. Hence, effects of staff's unfavorable justice perceptions for customers on employee COBs are expected to be negative until staff's unfavorable justice perceptions for themselves, interacting in this relationship, turn it positive.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Drawing on social exchange and compassion theories, the argument is made that staff members who are also victims of abuse by the hotel can empathize more with guests, turning quid pro quo responses to abuse of customers into compassionate responses.

**Findings** – Regression results from a field study of 280 employees at ten hotels in the Canary Islands provide general support for our hypotheses.

**Practical implications** – By understanding when and why (un)fair treatment of guests and staff has consequences for the hotel in the form of COBs, hotel managers can favor a better staff response to hotels' careful stewardship of the service encounter in terms of COBs. The reversal of the direction in the relationship suggests the unfolding of compassion within a justice framework, which challenges the long-lived perceived incompatibility between compassion and justice in the organizational literature.

**Originality/value** – The present study is the first one to study COBs stemming either from staff responses to hotels' abuse of customers or COBs resulting from the interaction between perceived justice for customers and justice perceptions for themselves.

**Keywords** Compassion, Organizational justice, Compassionate intervention, Customer-oriented behaviours, Justice-based appraisals, Third-party observers

**Paper type** Research paper

Most service encounters in the hospitality industry are viewed as including three actors: a contact staff member providing a service, a customer with whom he or she exercises control over the service process and a hotel organization defining the service encounter's environment (Bateson, 1985). Contact staff in a hotel often act as third parties because they have the opportunity to observe how the customers interact with tangible/intangible elements of the hotel (Shostack, 1985) or its agents, i.e. hotel representatives and staff. Prior justice research has generally focused on the actors from the point of view of justice for the self, namely, employees' and customers' reactions when receiving (un)fair treatment by "the hotel", which will be referred to in this study as the source of (un)fair treatment. Prior research has ignored, therefore, staff reactions to observing customers' (un)fair treatment by hotels, and this will be the first gap addressed by this study.



As interpersonal aspects in service settings are especially salient (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Karatepe, 2006), perceptions of interactional (in)justice – a form of (in)justice involving (mis)treatment received from the hotel or its agents during the service process (Bies and Moag, 1986) – appear to loom especially large in guest and staff experiences of suffering in a hotel, as such violations are deemed more severe and more unfair than those merely involving material harm (Alicke, 1992). In fact, suffering is a broad term that encompasses “enduring, inevitable or unavoidable loss, distress, pain or injury” (Pollock and Sands, 1997, p. 173), including job stress (Erickson *et al.*, 1972), lack of job security (Ashford *et al.*, 1989) or even the accumulation of minor everyday hassles (Chamberlain and Zika, 1990). Therefore, unfavorable interactional justice will be equated in this paper as staff’s perceptions of suffering experienced by customers and themselves.

Literature on care and compassion has habitually viewed justice as something rigid, static and linear (Shahzad *et al.*, 2014), and being fair as synonymous with being strict on equity and rules and ignoring casuistry. This could lead to a lack of compassion (Gallagher, 2009; Margalit, 1996; Tronto, 1993; Whitebrook, 2002). Goetz *et al.* (2010, p. 351) defined compassion (from the Latin, *com*: together, and *passio*: to suffer) “as the feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help”. This stark clash between organizational compassion and justice is, however, refuted by Solomon (1998, p. 520), who contends that “the heart of justice is care and compassion, and without that there can be no justice, no matter how equitable matters may seem”. Without doubt, there seems to be a need for empirical research that “reconciles” organizational compassion and justice (Frost *et al.*, 2000; Heckscher, 1994; Tsui, 2010). Accordingly, the paper will explore the way organizational justice brings out its dynamic and casuistry potential, to integrate compassion and justice in organizations.

The argument of this paper is as follows. The limited view of organizational justice is just a primary one-sided view of its nature, and depending on the way justice perceptions for the self and others are modeled, they are able to promote compassion. It is predicted, therefore, that if modeled alone, staff’s justice perceptions toward customers are dominated by rigid patterns of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Shahzad *et al.*, 2014). This will lead most staff to respond to justice perceptions for customers by experiencing a quid pro quo response (from the Latin, “something for something”) that decreases customer-oriented behaviors (COBs), neglecting support to customers. COBs are helping behaviors that Oliver (1980) suggests go beyond job descriptions, fulfilling – or even exceeding – customer expectations, and becoming a key element in service excellence. Few studies have paid attention to these behaviors within the hospitality industry (Ho and Gupta, 2012; Ma *et al.*, 2013, are rare exceptions).

In a second step, this paper contends that employees are motivated to respond compassionately to abused customers when staff’s justice perceptions for customers and for themselves are modeled together. As such, when they feel that they themselves are also victims of abuse by the hotel, we hypothesize that the quid pro quo response becomes reversed, and employees’ compassion toward customers unleashed. Based on compassion and deonance (from the Greek, *deon*: obligation) theories, it is argued that perceiving themselves as victims of the hotel’s unfair treatment makes staff more easily place themselves in the abused customer’s position and feel morally obligated to

respond compassionately increasing COBs. As far as we are aware, there are no previous empirical studies about these predictions.

In sum, this study first (*H1*) predicts that COBs and a lack of justice perceptions for customers will be significantly negatively related. We then propose that staff's lack of justice perceptions for themselves can act as a moderator in this link (*H2*), making the negative relationship between a lack of justice perceptions for customers and COBs positive. Finally, the paper will discuss theoretical and managerial implications of the findings.

### Theoretical background and hypotheses

For many decades, the justice theory framework has received considerable attention in the management literature as a way of explaining how the staff evaluates the organization's actions and reacts accordingly (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Greenberg, 1990, 2002; Masterson *et al.*, 2000; Moorman, 1991; Weaver and Treviño, 1999). Concerning customers, the literature has also used the way they are treated by the hotel through its enactors to predict their satisfaction with service and other customer outcomes (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Dewitt *et al.*, 2008; Karande *et al.*, 2007; Karatepe, 2006; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Ok *et al.*, 2005; Wirtz and Kum, 2004; Yi and Gong, 2008). This justice approach, therefore, introduces a research domain in the hospitality industry that offers extensive opportunities to better understand hotel service encounters.

As stated in the preceding discussion, hotel staff members often act as third parties in hotel's service encounters. Given that suffering is an inevitable aspect of the human condition (Barasch, 2005; Dalai Lama, 1995), the staff is quite likely to frequently become aware of a number of slights and disrespect of customers by the hotel, which is of vital importance to their own performance and success. Specificities of the hospitality industry indeed suggest that the hotel staff usually needs guests to be supported because their work is measured by customer response. Furthermore, by alleviating the grief, job stress and burnout of others, compassionate members of an organization can reduce financial costs significantly (Zaslow, 2002).

Employees can provide a compassionate response to others through helping behavior, which includes assisting others with work-related tasks (Anderson and Williams, 1996), offering care and support to coworkers with personal problems (Kahn, 1998), doing favors (Flynn and Brockner, 2003) and cooperating with peers (Dukerich *et al.*, 2002). COBs are helping behaviors as well. They are especially valuable in achieving customer satisfaction with service, particularly in hospitality services where customers are lodged and interact with employees over time. COBs will form part of the basis of this paper as the staff's compassionate reactions to injustice perceptions for guests. Organ *et al.* (2006, p. 221) defined COBs as those:

[...] extra-role behaviors aimed at the customer, including serving as an interface between the customer and others in the organization, providing referrals for products or services from other companies, and giving the customer information about the industry (Figure 1).

Organizational justice for the self has been found to be positively associated with COBs (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2005; Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Chou and Lopez-Rodriguez, 2013), and this paper expects to find similar associations concerning justice perceptions for guests. In fact, previous third-party literature has suggested that an observer who

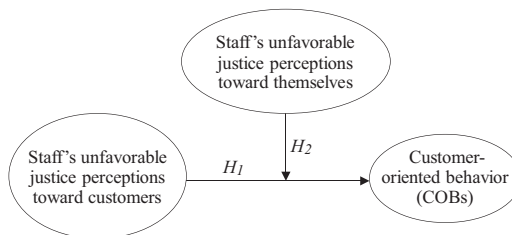
witnesses (in)justice is likely to respond to perceived justice for others in a manner similar to that of an actor-victim in the situation (Skarlicki *et al.*, 1999). Unfavorable justice perceptions for customers, therefore, are expected to be an antecedent of decreased COBs. The argument is made that the main effects of a lack of justice perceptions for customers on COBs are governed by social exchange dynamics (Blau, 1964), which primarily would lead staff to experience a quid pro quo response (from the Latin, “something for something”) that decreases COBs. In effect, as Vargo and Lusch (2008) suggest, an exchange relationship exists between a service organization and its staff with regard to customer treatment because “the customer is always a coproducer”. This implies that the fact customers are fairly treated concerns the staff because that fairness can create a fruitful service encounter (Bowen, 1986; Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004). If, because of hotel unfairness, the staff are unable to obtain customers’ positive responses, it is likely that the staff pressure the hotel into doing something because it puts their success and reward at risk. Using the exchange patterns as a political or influential behavior (Yukl and Falbe, 1990) for redress justice, the staff will harm the hotel with decreased COBs (Blau, 1964), even if they have to reject compassionate responses toward customers:

*H1.* Until they feel compassion about maltreated customers, the more unfavorable employees’ perceptions of justice for customers are, the more they will engage in decreased COBs.

Appraisal theorists recognize that self-relevant events produce emotion intensity (Scherer, 2001), and so the presence of subjective evaluation may lead staff to feel hotel unfairness toward customers with more intensity. By making them feel close to customers who share “a similar fate” or “the same pain”, one subjective evaluation that may exacerbate the emotional state of staff is their perception of receiving themselves unfair treatment by the hotel (Skarlicki *et al.*, 1999). In this regard, Gaudine and Thorne (2001) state that emotions are especially present in moral decision-making, thus suggesting that the interaction between observing and receiving unfair treatment by the hotel can lead staff to react ethically. In this regard, Folger *et al.* (2005) contend that justice is a type of social appraisal about which people can be ethically concerned, through an affect-based process.

As compassion has been found to be a response that can be ethically driven (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara and Guerra-Báez, 2014), based on the deonance theory of fairness (Folger, 2001), this paper proposes a significant interaction between observing and receiving unfair treatment by the hotel. It is argued that under the effects of both types of justice, staff members are led more easily to internalize the unfair treatment of guests, increasing their empathic concern and moral obligation to deontically (from the

**Figure 1.**  
Hypothesized model  
of justice perceptions  
for themselves as a  
moderator of the link  
between justice  
perceptions for  
customers and COBs



Greek, *deon*: obligation) help them with COBs. As such, through an automatic and affect-based process (Folger *et al.*, 2005), the deonance theory of fairness (Folger, 2001) suggests that the staff members will be morally unable to “look the other way” (Gaudine and Thorne, 2001). Even if they have to refrain (Turillo *et al.*, 2002) from reciprocating in kind against their hotel as a tool for redress justice (Yukl and Falbe, 1990), the staff engage in positive COBs making the dynamics of social exchange compassionate. In fact, some scholars have found that people are more likely to extend compassion toward and be willing to help those to whom they feel more closely related (Cialdini *et al.*, 1997) or those who have similar values, preferences, characteristics or beliefs (Eisenberg and Miller, 1987):

- H2. Once they feel compassion about maltreated customers, the more unfavorable employees' perceptions of justice for themselves are, the more their perceptions of unfavorable justice for customers will lead them to engage in COBs, making this relationship positive.

## Method

### *Procedure and sample characteristics*

Data were collected from employees at ten hotels in Gran Canaria (Spain). Gran Canaria receives about 3.23 million foreign tourists a year, with European countries being its principal markets. British and German tourists jointly represent 41 per cent of the total, and Scandinavians make up 28 per cent. The surveys were collected from two sampled two-star hotels (13 per cent), two three-star hotels (15 per cent), four four-star hotels (49 per cent) and two five-star hotels (23 per cent). Hotels' workforces in the sample range from 27 to 211 employees, so that the response rate ranges from 18 to 56 per cent, 23 per cent overall.

Surveyors rejected the employees who did not meet the criterion of working in the hotel for at least six months, so that the participants would have had a socialization period in the hotel. After receiving official approval, surveyors personally asked random staff to fill out the questionnaires in different places and situations within the hotel, to avoid response biases. In all, 304 employees agreed to respond to the paper-and-pencil questionnaire, which was self-administered during a break in their workday. We offered no incentive other than face-to-face advice when necessary. The sample comprised 46.8 per cent men and 53.2 per cent women; 32.6 per cent were aged 35 years or younger, and 11.8 per cent were aged 55 years or older. In addition, 64.5 per cent were permanent employees, and the rest were temporary staff. Finally, 29.1 per cent of the respondents had only finished elementary school. Eventually, there were 280 valid responses, after 24 were rejected due to incorrect completion and/or incoherent information.

### *Measures*

All items were scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), and in the case of COBs, from 1 (never) to 7 (constantly) (items Cronbach's alpha values are presented in Table I).

*Justice perceptions for customers.* Interactional injustice for customers was assessed with a four-item measure ( $\alpha = 0.909$ ) constructed by the authors on the basis on favorable interactional justice dimension rooted in the equity theory by Adams (1963). Items from Severt (2002) and Smith *et al.* (1999) were combined, including “I have witnessed how my hotel treats guests with kindness and consideration”.



IJOA 24,3	Factor structure	Factor loadings	SMC	Composite reliability	AVE	
476	<i>(F1) Justice perceptions for themselves</i> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.929)		–	0.931	0.692	
	My supervisor					
	... is able to suppress personal bias	0.878				
	... takes steps to deal with me in a truthful manner	0.875				
	... considers my viewpoint	0.839				
	... treats me with kindness and consideration	0.815				
	... provides me with timely feedback about decisions and their implications	0.801				
	... shows concern for my rights as an employee	0.779				
	<i>(F3) Justice perceptions for customers</i> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.909)			0.037	0.893	0.735
	I have witnessed that my hotel . . .					
	Has been honest with hotel guests	0.915				
	Shows concern for the rights of guests as customers	0.910				
	Treats guests with kindness and consideration	0.875				
	Deals with guests in a truthful and open manner	0.713				
	<i>(F2) Customer-oriented behavior (COBs)</i> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.841)			0.101	0.846	0.504
	Show a polite and sincere interest in customers, even when their complain is no reasonable	0.839				
	I make constructive suggestions for service	0.717				
	Go out of your way to help guests who are lost in corridors, even though this is not required by the job	0.770				
	During my break at work I have helped customers to be comfortable in the hotel	0.693				
	Voluntarily take extra time to satisfy customers' needs, even though this is not required by the hotel	0.637				
	Willingly take time to help guests who have personal problems	0.572				
	<b>Table I.</b> Results of confirmatory factor analysis	<b>Notes:</b> SMC = Squared multiple correlation; AVE = average variance extracted; Cmin = 363.523; df = 101; $p < 0.001$ ; Cmin/df = 3.599; CFI = 0.911; IFI = 0.912; TLI = 0.880; NFI = 0.882; RMSEA = 0.069				

*Justice perceptions for themselves.* We assessed favorable interactional justice by using six items ( $\alpha = 0.929$ ) from the scale developed by Moorman (1991) about employees' perceptions of how fairly their supervisors treat them. Items include "My supervisor shows concern for my rights as an employee".

*Customer-oriented behaviors.* COBs were measured using a six-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.708$ ) constructed by the authors, emphasizing Oliver's (1980) concept (exceed customer's role

expectations). We basically drew on the Lee and Allen (2002) scale to assess interactional citizenship behavior (OCB-I). As Lee and Allen (2002) studied that OCB-I directed at coworkers, some items were re-worded by just changing “coworkers” to “guests”. For example, “Willingly give time to help *guests* who have personal problems”. Other items, however, were more difficult to adapt by merely changing the target. Drawing on Lee and Allen’s (2002) OCBI-scale and the Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara *et al.* (2012) client-targeted citizenship measure for civil servants, three new items were included:

- (1) “Show a polite and sincere interest in customers, even when their complaint is not reasonable”.
- (2) “Go out of your way to help guests who are lost in corridors”.
- (3) “Voluntarily take extra time to satisfy customers’ needs”. Finally, the “I make constructive suggestions for service improvement” item developed by Ma *et al.* (2013) was also included.

*Control variables.* Drawing on the literature, gender (1 = male, 2 = female) and age (1 = up to 25 years; 2 = more than 25 and up to 40; 3 = more than 40 and up to 55; 4 = more than 55 and up to 70; 5 = 70 and older) could co-vary with our in/dependent variables.

#### *Statistical analysis*

Structural equation modeling was used to calculate confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure that the variables in this study were three separate constructs. The collected data were also analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences. Cronbach’s alpha, calculated to assess the reliability of the scales, ranged from 0.841 to 0.929, above the recommended alpha of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

CFAs determined whether all the data loaded according to the expected three-factor structure. CFA tests of the construct validity included the comparative-fit (CFI), normed-fit (NFI), Tucker–Lewis (TLI), incremental-fit (IFI) indices and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Table I displays the CFA results for the three variables in this study. The CFA results show that items loadings are above 0.5, supporting the expected three-factor structure, but the fit of the three-factor solution is low ( $\chi^2 = 363.523$ ,  $df = 101$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.91; IFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.88; NFI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.069), with several indexes below 0.90 and RMSEA over 0.05. However, as RMSEA is actually one of the most informative criteria in covariance structure modeling, and RMSEAs between 0.05 and 0.08 do not necessarily indicate mediocre or poor fit (Byrne, 1998), a RMSEA = 0.069 (far below 0.08) provides support worth considering for the distinctiveness of the three constructs used in this study (Table I).

## Results

Table I also shows that the composite reliability ranged from 0.887 to 0.794, above the standard of 0.60 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). We also used a set of established procedures to check for the convergent validity and discriminant validity of our scales. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was between 0.504 and 0.735, which was higher than 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981), supporting convergent validity. As shown in Table II, we measured discriminant validity by calculating the square roots of the AVE values (on the main diagonal) and testing whether they were consistently greater than all the corresponding correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore,



the results support discriminant validity. Once they were factor-analyzed, descriptive statistics calculated the means and standard deviations of the variables.

Table II shows the scale means, standard deviations, square roots of the AVEs and correlations ( $r$ ). The latter seems to be significantly correlated in the expected directions. First, to obtain consistency in the directions between the justice perceptions and COBs variables, the scores of the justice perceptions were reversed. Next, multiple hierarchical regression analyses (Aiken and West, 1991) were performed to test the hypotheses, considering models with COBs as the criterion variable (Table III). In these models, the main effects of perceptions of lack of justice for customers on COBs ( $H1$ ) were first tested to later examine the interactive effects of justice perceptions on COBs ( $H2$ ). Three steps were followed. First, the control variables were entered in Step 1, followed by

**Table II.**  
Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	1.53	0.50	–				
2. Age	3.08	1.07	0.047	–			
3. Justice perceptions for customers	5.64	1.53	0.045	0.014	(0.857)		
4. Justice perceptions for staff	5.63	1.38	–0.011	0.091	0.193*	(0.831)	
5. COBs	5.50	1.34	0.014	0.023	0.259**	0.200*	(0.708)

**Notes:** The numbers in parentheses on the diagonal are the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE),  $N = 280$ ; \* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table III.**  
Results of regression analyses

<i>y</i>	Customer-oriented behaviors (COBs)			
	<i>B</i>	Standard error (SE)	<i>t</i>	Significance
<i>Step 1</i>				
Gender	0.017	0.081	0.012	0.204
Age	0.036	0.081	0.026	0.436
$R^2$	0.001			
<i>Step 2</i>				
Gender	0.020	0.080	0.246	0.806
Age	0.010	0.080	0.125	0.900
Injustice perceptions for customers	–0.285	0.080	–3.558***	0.000
$\Delta R^2$	0.062***			
<i>Step 3</i>				
Gender	0.014	0.077	0.186	0.852
Age	0.002	0.078	0.032	0.975
Injustice perceptions for customers	–0.293	0.079	–3.723***	0.000
Injustice perceptions for themselves	–0.249	0.080	–3.117**	0.002
Injustice for customers x Injustice for themselves	0.173	0.067	2.567*	0.011
$\Delta R^2$	0.049***			
Adjusted $R^2$	0.095***			
<i>F</i> (5, 280)	6.777***			

**Notes:**  $N = 280$ ; levels of significance: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

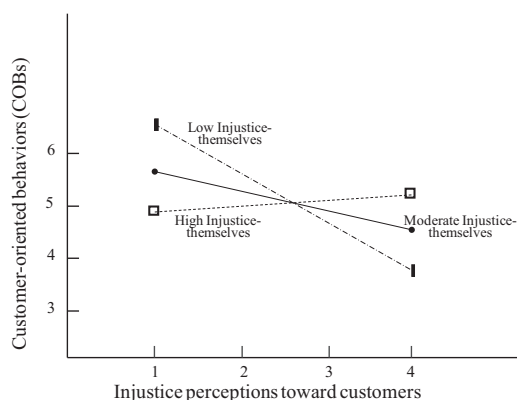
perceptions of lack of justice for customers in Step 2. The Step 2 results made it possible to test *H1* by inspecting main effects on COBs. Finally, the calculations end with the addition of the two-way interactions in Step 3. The variables were centered to reduce multicollinearity, thus using unstandardized regression coefficients (Aiken and West, 1991). The statistical significance of the change in  $R^2$  when the interaction terms were added to the Step 3 equation was appraised to test the hypothesized moderating effects.

As Table III shows, perceptions of a lack of justice for customers had a significant and negative main effect on COBs ( $B = -0.285$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These patterns support *H1*. Table III also shows that the two-way interactions as a set explained a statistically reliable amount of incremental variance in COBs ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.049$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Inspection of the individual interaction terms also revealed a significant moderating effect between the two types of justice on COBs ( $B = 0.173$ ;  $p = 0.011$ ) in Step 3, which turns the studied main relationship into a positive one. These data support *H2*.

Finally, the nature of the different interactions on COBs involving both justice perceptions is represented graphically. Following the method recommended by Aiken and West (1991), values of the variables were chosen 1 SD above and below the mean. Simple regression lines were generated by entering these values in the regression equation. Figure 2 graphically presents the two-way interaction effects on COBs. In Figure 2, COBs were regressed on injustice-customer for the three different levels of injustice for themselves. As shown, the slopes are less steep as injustice for themselves increases from low to moderate injustice for themselves, becoming reversed (only) in the case of high-injustice for themselves. This means that the higher the injustice-themselves level, the less injustice-customer discourages COBs, even encouraging COBs when injustice-themselves is high.

## Discussion

Prior empirical research is unclear in providing an answer about how employees act when confronted with unfair treatment of customers by the hotel in terms of COBs (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2013 is a rare exception not conducted in the hospitality industry or on COBs). The present study may contribute to bridging this gap. Unfortunately, the results suggest that the staff confronted with unfair treatment of customers by the hotel decrease COBs and, hence, do nothing to help customers even though they may be aware



**Figure 2.** Conceptual illustration of the two-way interaction effects of injustice perceptions for themselves, injustice perceptions for customers on COBs as it is described in the text

that they are victims of hotel abuse. This passivity is congruent with Miller (1999) and other psychological theories, according to which individuals seem to be primarily self-interested; that is, their first impulse (e.g. in responding to injustice) is to have more concern for themselves than for others. Despite this passivity, the results suggest that the staff's own distress about experiencing unfairness might act as a trigger that leads them to empathize with the customers' feelings of unfairness and take compassionate action. This interplay between justice for self and for guests is perfectly illustrated by the famous quote by Martin Luther King, Jr, (letter from Birmingham jail, April 16, 1963), "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". The results of this paper, therefore, offer several implications for justice literature and suggest specific new courses of action for managers. Finally, the paper opens up several avenues for future research.

First, prior literature on compassion (Frost, 2003) and third-party intervention (Skarlicki and Kulik, 2005) has shown a great deal of interest in determining what factors can lead individuals to action when faced with others' suffering from a justice perspective (Colquitt *et al.*, 2005). By supporting a moderating role of injustice for themselves in triggering increased COBs, the present study offers information about how and when these helping behaviors toward the sufferer are possible. In fact, the results not only found unfavorable justice perceptions for customers and COBs to be significantly negatively related but also showed that unfavorable justice perceptions for themselves act as a moderator that reverses the direction of this link. This supports the presence of compassion in a justice framework. Until now, organizational justice and compassion have not been empirically studied together, probably due to the previously commented identified incompatibility between them. This study contributes to better understanding of how suffering performing as injustice for customers and COBs, as a compassionate responding, can perform together.

Second, the results suggest that staff could perform COBs not only when they are reciprocating to a "fair hotel" but also when they are moved by compassion toward customers, even though they are discontent with the hotel's fairness. In the former case, COBs stem from a quid pro quo-based experience that seems to activate an organizational justice that follows positivism and objectivity, decision-making based on reciprocity, equality and rules, and thus the feminist notions of particularity and need are rejected (Shahzad *et al.*, 2014). In the latter case, however, staff is also able to increase COBs despite the hotel's unfairness, based on experiences of compassion. Following an automatic and affect-based process developed by the deonance theory of fairness (Folger, 2001; Folger *et al.*, 2005), the results here seem to bring out the dynamic and casuistry potential of organizational justice, grounding its rationality in holism and context, and envisaging the necessity for empathy, harmony and emotions in meeting guests' needs (Hall *et al.*, 2012).

As the interaction between the two perceptions of lack of justice is a very specific circumstance in which justice perceptions for themselves are able to trigger compassion (and, in turn, desirable COBs for the hotel), providing hotel organizations with compassionate staff also raises warnings to managers. For example, suggesting that compassion can dangerously "hide" the negative effects of the hotel's unfair treatment, creating the erroneous impression that episodes of mistreatment in the hotel are innocuous. Both unfavorable justice perceptions reflect negative events in a hotel and must be eradicated to achieve effective functioning. Furthermore, although decreased

staff COBs occur when employees experience both justice perceptions together, the justice perceptions to customers-COBs link only becomes positive for high-injustice for themselves (Figure 2). It must be taken into account, therefore, that moderate and low justice levels for staff and customers seem to only perform as a mere inconvenience experienced due to slights by the hotel. They may not be strong enough to be equated with “suffering” as described earlier, and lead to compassion.

Finally, as preventing injustice for customers is a useful strategy for strengthening healthy employee reciprocations in the form of COBs, practical management strategies that favor COBs should take into account that it is especially relevant to prevent injustice in customer events that are visible to third-party employees (e.g. verbal disrespect toward guests, inconsiderate manners, high-pitched voice, unkind gestures, etc.). Based on the same reasoning, service areas of the hotel where guests interact daily with service providers should receive special attention. Managers must discuss this fact with the service workforce and its supervisors to provide new understanding about the operation of service encounters in a hotel.

Addressing questions raised but not responded to in this study could certainly be the basis for future research. First, consistent with previous studies, third parties can also view distributive and procedural justice violations as unfair (Skarlicki *et al.*, 1998), thus suggesting new avenues for future research. Moreover, future research could also focus on the previously identified incompatibility between principles of justice and compassion. Instead of insisting that any adequate sense of justice presupposes care and compassion, some authors oppose the (supposedly male) concept of justice to (female) caring and compassion (Solomon, 1998). Gender, therefore, can play here a crucial role.

Finally, we acknowledge that this study has several weaknesses. First, we used a cross-sectional methodology, increasing the likelihood that the study could suffer from mono-method/source bias. Next, the employees in the study have certain job conditions and norms that are often inherent to the peculiarities of workers in the hospitality sector. Consequently, the performance of the constructs used in our study, as well as their implications, could vary in other institutions in other industry contexts.

In conclusion, the inclusion of justice perceptions for themselves as an element that leads to compassionate responses to customer abuse by hotels raises the importance of studying organizational justice and compassion together. If the staff perceives signs of customers' abuse in their dealings with the hotel, and justice perceptions for themselves are also present, the staff is led to react to customers' suffering by turning *quid pro quo* responses into compassion, and increases COBs. Perhaps Thomas Aquinas was not so far off when he claimed that “no one becomes compassionate unless he suffers” (cited by Barasch, 2005, p. 13).

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**Further reading**

Chamberlain, K. and Zika, S. (1988), "Measuring meaning in life: an examination of three scales", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 589-596.

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