



Thank you for the bad news: Reducing cynicism in highly identified employees during adverse organizational change

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Adverse changes, such as layoffs or wage cuts, can irremediably damage the relationship between employees and their organization. This makes it all the more important for organizations to provide information about these changes to avoid the emergence of organizational cynicism among their employees. Drawing on uncertainty management theory, we argue that informational justice and organizational identification jointly regulate organizational cynicism in the context of adverse change. In addition, we examine whether informational justice influences employee exit intentions through cynicism. We test our hypotheses using a multi-method approach, encompassing one experiment (Study 1), one large-scale survey of 1,795 employees undergoing a major restructuring (Study 2), and a five-wave field survey of 174 workers undergoing layoffs and wage cuts (Study 3). In all three studies, poorer communication from the organization predicted greater exit intentions through increased cynicism for employees who were more (rather than less) identified with the organization. By integrating the literature on informational justice, organizational identification, and cynicism, our research offers a more nuanced understanding of the antecedents and consequences of cynicism in the context of adverse organizational change.

Practitioner points

- Organizations undergoing adverse changes, such as layoffs and wage cuts, should provide employees with timely and detailed explanations for the changes (i.e., informational justice).
- When employees do not receive timely and detailed explanations for adverse changes, they are more likely to become cynical, and to decide to leave the organization.
- Providing adequate explanations is especially important for employees who strongly identify with the organizations because they are more sensitive to informational justice.
- Providing explanations is not as effective in reducing cynicism among employees with low levels of organizational identification.
- When organizations fail to explain adverse changes, employees who identify strongly with the organization may become as cynical as employees whose identities are less closely tied to the organization.

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Negative outcomes, such as layoffs or wage cuts, are likely to undermine the relationship between employees and their organization. When decisions that can harm employees are unexpected and call into doubt the sincerity of the organization, employees may react with organizational cynicism, defined as a state of general disillusionment towards their organization (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). Unlike employees who are doubtful but remain optimistic (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997), cynical employees have lost faith in their organizations following disappointment and unmet expectations. Whereas the seeds of employee doubt may be overcome when organizations provide explanations and offer assurances regarding the future, once cynicism takes root employees are unlikely to accept at face value justifications provided for organizational decisions (Dean et al., 1998; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018). This makes it all the more important for organizations to take steps to avoid the emergence of organizational cynicism among their employees.

Employees become cynical when their faith in decisions of the organization gives way to doubts regarding the organization's integrity and intentions (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). Such doubts are often prompted by negative events, and especially ones which bring uncertainty, disappointment, and disillusionment. Therefore, in the context of adverse and potentially threatening organizational changes, the likelihood of cynicism emerging among employees is heightened. At such times, the words and actions of the managers as organizational representatives and decision-makers are scrutinized by employees. The explanations provided by managers can provide reassurance to employees regarding future positive outcomes (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Brown, Kulik, Cregan, & Metz, 2017), as well as the quality of their relationship with the organization (Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002; Brown et al., 2017). Indeed, scholars have long demonstrated that the information and explanations which employees receive regarding negative events are crucial in shaping their inferences about the 'goodness of [the organization's] intentions' (Shapiro, 1991; p.628). Therefore, in the present research, we focus on the role of informational justice – defined as the quality and timeliness of the explanations that employees receive from the organization (Colquitt, 2001) – in shaping organizational cynicism.

Although the sincerity and integrity of their organization are likely to be a concern to all employees, employees who identify highly with their organization may be especially sensitive to information signalling uncertainty or changes in that relationship. As a result, they are likely to pay increased attention to explanations from the organization that could provide assurances, or not, regarding the quality of the relationship. We, therefore, propose that the beneficial effect of informational justice in assuaging cynicism will depend on employees' level of identification with their organization. Finally, we relate informational justice and organizational cynicism to an intention targeted at and reflecting disillusionment with the organization, namely exit intentions. Indeed, previous research suggests that major organizational changes, such as layoffs, can increase the exit intentions of surviving employees (Maertz, Wiley, LeRouge, & Campion, 2010), as described by the so-called survivor syndrome (Van Dick, Drzensky, & Heinz, 2016). Thus, in addition to employee exit being the most dramatic among all possible reactions to cynicism (Hirschman, 1970), exit intentions expressed publicly among co-workers might also lead to perilous and contagious effects among employees (Felps et al., 2009).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual moderated-mediation model that guided our research. By examining the relationships depicted in our model, we make three primary theoretical contributions. First, we extend understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of organizational cynicism (Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013; Cole,

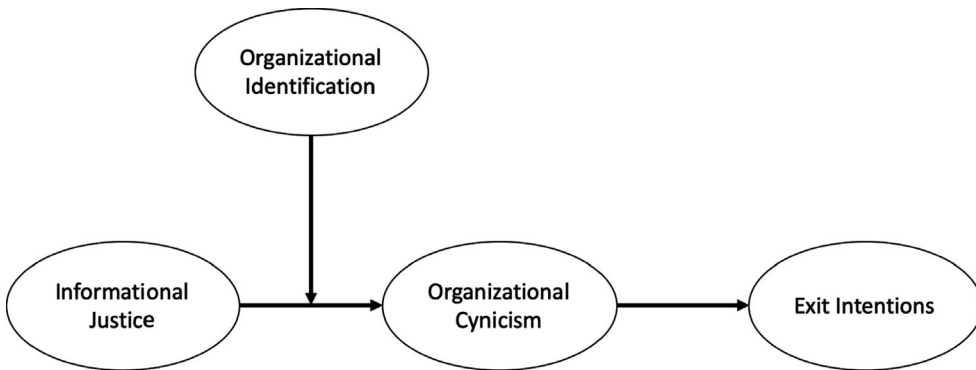


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Bruch, & Vogel, 2004; Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). Specifically, we show the distinctive effect of informational justice on organizational cynicism, especially for more highly identified employees, and through cynicism, on exit intentions. In doing so, we respond to Chiaburu et al.'s (2013) call for research on the mediational role of cynicism. Our findings also illuminate the cognitive nature of cynicism by demonstrating the role of informational justice in mitigating the concerns and uncertainties that underlie cynicism.

Second, we add to a newly emerging understanding of organizational identification. Whereas historically organizational identification has been associated with positive outcomes (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Conroy, Becker, & Menges, 2017; Riketta, 2005), recent work has suggested that it may also predict negative responses to adverse organizational events (e.g., Conroy, Henle, Shore, & Stelman, 2017; De Cremer, 2005). In line with this logic, we suggest that organizational identification increases employee sensitivity to informational injustice, which can have both positive and negative effects, depending on the level of informational justice. On the one hand, when organizations are informationally just in the context of adverse events, higher identification can mitigate cynicism; on the other hand, when organizations undertake changes but fail to provide adequate explanations, employees who are highly identified become as cynical as those who are less identified. Thus, our findings offer a more complete understanding of the importance of organizational identification in the context of organizational change and respond to the call by Conroy, Becker, et al. (2017) and Conroy, Henle, et al. (2017) for more scholarly research on the 'dark side' of organizational identification.

Finally, our research contributes to the organizational justice literature. To date, limited research has focused on understanding the specific impact of informational justice on employees' work attitudes and behaviours compared to the other justice facets (Skarlicki et al., 2008). Moreover, the research that does exist presumes that informational justice is uniformly beneficial and to date has not examined when and why informational justice might have little impact on employees' reactions. We suggest that informational justice may have less benefit for reducing cynicism during times of change among people whose identities are less intertwined with the organization. Thus, we highlight a critical boundary condition of the beneficial effects of informational justice in the context of adverse change.

The present research provides important managerial implications. We show that informational justice offers a vital tool to prevent the development of organizational cynicism among employees who are most highly identified with the organization. Thus,

our findings offer a way for organizations to proactively tackle employee voluntary turnover in the aftermath of adverse change. Simultaneously, our findings highlight that in difficult times employers should not take for granted the employees who are highly identified with the organization. It is precisely these individuals who may become cynical in the context of low informational justice, yet they are likely to be especially valuable during challenging times and the employees whom employers seek to retain.

Theoretical background and hypotheses

Organizational justice and uncertainty reduction

Employees are especially attentive to fairness when they feel uncertain about important aspects of their lives (Van den Bos, 2001), including in their relationship to their organization. Fair treatment shows employees that they have status and inclusion in their organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Although Van den Bos and Lind (2002) assert that fairness is especially important whenever there is turmoil and uncertainty in the workplace, they identified layoffs as the situation that ‘perhaps raises the greatest uncertainty in organizational contexts’ (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002, p. 20). This is hardly surprising given the doubts that organizational layoffs can sow in the minds of employees regarding the quality of their own relationship with the organization. According to uncertainty management theory (UMT; Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), unexpected and negative events prompt employees to question the values that underlie decision-makers’ priorities and whether the decision-makers consistently adhere to these values (Van den Bos, 2005).

Fairness can both reduce employee uncertainty regarding their relationship with the organization and help employees cope with uncertainty. Amidst uncertainty, fairness provides assurances regarding the predictability of future events and the reliability of authority figures (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). For example, Van den Bos, Wilke, and Lind (1998) showed that being provided with voice opportunities into a decision predicted participants’ satisfaction with the outcomes, but only when there was uncertainty regarding the trustworthiness of the authority. Other research similarly shows stronger effects of organizational justice on work outcomes when people feel greater versus less uncertainty (for review, see Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Thus, in times of uncertainty, being treated fairly reassures employees that they are valued and will not be exploited, while a lack of fairness signals that employees can no longer rely on the entity in question. This can lead to disillusionment regarding the organization, suspicion regarding their motives, and doubts regarding information and explanations provided – that is, organizational cynicism.

Effects of informational justice on organizational cynicism

Cynicism involves heightened attention to the negative due to past disappointments (Leung, Ip, & Leung, 2010). Management scholars have typically regarded employee cynicism as an attitude directed at specific targets (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998), such as an occupation (O’Connell, Holzman, & Armandi, 1986) or executives (Andersson, 1996). We focus on employee cynicism targeting the organization as whole, which can be influenced over time by specific events and organizational actions, including layoffs and wage cuts (Anderson & Bateman, 1997; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003; Wilhelm, 1993).

Although some research has conceptualized organizational cynicism as an attitude comprising beliefs, affect, and behavioural tendencies towards an organization (e.g., Dean et al., 1998), we follow Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005) in focusing on the cognitive component of cynical attitudes. Cynical employees tend to view their organizations through a lens of suspicion and believe that managers and the organization will be exploitative and insincere, for example, when undertaking change initiatives (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Brown et al., 2017; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018). Griep and Vantilbourgh (2018) conclude that employee cynicism can function as a heuristic to evaluate new information and, as well, trigger vigilant monitoring of employer actions. Once present, cynicism may undermine subsequent efforts by authorities to explain their decisions, show concern for employees, and demonstrate positive intentions, all of which can be perceived by cynical employees as manipulative and insincere. Consistent with this account, justice scholars have long suggested a role for justice perceptions in change contexts (e.g., Cobb, Wooten, & Folger, 1995; Novelli, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 1995), and empirical research supports the importance of justice perceptions for assuaging negative reactions to organizational change. In the present research, we focus on the effect of informational justice on cynicism, with the former defined as the provision of timely, detailed, and sincere explanations regarding organizational decisions (Colquitt, 2001) – in essence, the degree to which authorities are transparent and truthful with employees. We focus on informational justice for three reasons.

First, employees often have no first-hand information about the decision-making procedures underlying decisions; thus, they judge the fairness of organizational decisions based on the explanations and communications received from the organization (Shapiro, 1991). This idea is in line with research on UMT showing a primacy effect in fairness judgments, whereby in times of high uncertainty, individuals' fairness perceptions are shaped by whatever fairness-related information is available first (e.g. Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 2001). Research has also demonstrated a substitutability effect such that, regardless of the type of fairness information encountered first, people use this early information as a substitute for missing information regarding other justice dimensions (e.g., Van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, & Vermunt, 1998; see for review, Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). Therefore, because of their availability, explanations from management in times of high uncertainty are likely to play a crucial role in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness during major organizational change (Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2005; Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005; Cole et al., 2004; Shapiro, 1991). Explanations offered for unfavourable events can mitigate employee's negative reactions because they foster the belief that the decision-makers' actions were fair and based on sound judgment (Bies, 1987).

Second, from a conceptual standpoint, we argue that informational justice perceptions are especially important during adverse organizational changes because employees perceive informational justice as more discretionary than procedural and distributive justice (Scott, Colquitt, & Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Scott, Paddock, & Colquitt, 2009). As a result, informational justice is likely to be regarded as more diagnostic of an organization's motives and intentions during times of high uncertainty, than is procedural or distributive justice (Kim, 2009). Detailed explanations from management are therefore likely to be attributed to the honesty, sincerity, and reasonable motives of the organization or manager communicating (Bies, 1987; Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2005). In contrast, the organization is likely to be held responsible for poor quality of explanations regarding adverse change (low informational justice) and as a result suspicion regarding the organization's motives – or in other words, organizational cynicism – is likely to be induced.

Third, as discussed earlier, we follow Stanley et al. (2005) in focusing on the cognitive component as a key characteristic of cynicism, reflected in disbelief regarding the motives of others. Thus, based on UMT, informational justice should be especially pertinent in curtailing the development of cynicism precisely because it involves giving employees information and knowledge for evaluating organizational decisions, thereby reducing uncertainty about the change (Au & Leung, 2016). When employees receive a clear explanation for the change, they are more likely to feel valued and perceive lower levels of uncertainty (Brown et al., 2017). As Griep and Vantilborg (2018; p. 427) note, ‘managers need to adhere to principles of truth and fair dealing in interaction with their employees [. . .] By doing so, they create an atmosphere in which cynicism is unlikely to prosper’.

Interestingly, in line with our logic, scholars have suggested that organizations can reduce cynicism through better communication. For example, Reichers et al. (1997) and Choi (2011) propose steps such as keeping people informed, communicating in a timely manner, and explaining past actions. Research also suggests that inadequate communication during adverse change can increase employees’ negative attitudes and suspicion towards the organization (Andersson, 1996; Brown et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2005). Consistent with this view, in their meta-analysis of employee cynicism, Chiaburu et al. (2013) reported a negative correlation between interactional justice – an amalgam of informational and interpersonal justice – and organizational cynicism based on two different cross-sectional correlational studies (Bernerth, Armenakis, Feild, & Walker, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2002). Therefore, although some prior theorizing and research is in line with our reasoning, we advance the literature by testing a nuanced and more complete model regarding the joint effect of informational justice and organizational identification on cynicism, and on exit intentions through cynicism.

The moderating role of organizational identification on the relationship between informational justice and organizational cynicism

Organizational identification is defined as ‘the degree to which a member defines himself or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization’ (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; p. 29). According to UMT, people pay greater attention to justice when they feel uncertain about aspects of their life that are important to them. As employees who strongly identify with their organization have positive expectations of and strong relationships with their organization, adverse organizational change is likely to elicit greater uncertainty and doubts. Van Dick et al. (2016) provide evidence that the so-called survivor syndrome can be explained by the detrimental effects of downsizing on survivors’ identification with their employer. An explanation for this finding is that adverse changes, such as layoffs or wage cuts, are appraised as potential threats to organizational identity (Petriglieri, 2011), which may be more important to highly identified employees.

Justice theory (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1998; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002) has recognized that the effects of justice perceptions can be stronger among employees who feel psychologically intertwined with their organization – or in other words, those who strongly identify with their organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Pratt, 1998). For example, De Cremer found that perceptions of procedural justice influenced subsequent cooperation (De Cremer, 2006) and retaliation (De Cremer, 2005) more when individuals’ collective identification was high. Especially relevant to the present research, Van Knippenberg, Martin, and Tyler (2006) demonstrated that, within the context of organizational change, individuals who identify strongly with their organization were

more interested in learning information about how the change was being implemented (the essence of informational justice) relative to those who identify less strongly. The latter findings are supportive of our reasoning, but to our knowledge, previous research has not yet examined the interaction between organizational identification and informational justice on reactions to organizational change, or on work attitudes and behaviours more broadly.

Research also indicates that exposure to specific organizational events such as organizational change (Reichers et al., 1997) and psychological contract breach more generally (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003) can trigger cynicism, while work environments characterized by high levels of engagement and information sharing can buffer against it (Brown & Cregan, 2008). However, factors relating to organizational justice that may increase the likelihood that *some* employees – but not all – become cynical in the context of adverse change, and why they do so, have not been considered. We argue that informational justice is likely to be especially influential among highly identified employees whose positive expectations regarding the organization can, if not met, lead to disappointment and a loss of faith in the organization, and hence cynicism (Reichers et al., 1997). During adverse changes, highly identified employees are, thus, likely to be especially receptive to information that can counterbalance the uncertainty surrounding their relationship with the organization. Thus, we argue that poor explanations regarding layoffs and wage cuts violate the positive expectations of employees who are more highly identified and, thus, more concerned about fairness. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. Organizational identification moderates the relationship between informational justice and organizational cynicism.

Moderated-mediation effect on exit intentions

Research has demonstrated negative effects of cynicism, including emotional exhaustion and burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), absenteeism (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), distrust (Pugh, Skarlicki, & Passell, 2003), reduced job satisfaction, and lower commitment (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Negative evaluations of one's work environment – as reflected in organizational cynicism – are frequently triggered by jarring events such as layoffs or wage cuts and are likely to lead to voluntary turnover (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996; Mobley, 1977; Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007). What is more, previous research indicates that major organizational change initiatives, such as layoffs, can increase the exit intentions of surviving employees (Maertz et al., 2010). Increases in exit intentions have been shown to be a common reaction when, as in the context of major organizational changes, employees see a conflict between their ideal organization and the reality that they are experiencing (Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999; Maertz & Campion, 2004). It is, therefore, not surprising that Chiaburu et al. (2013) found that employee cynicism relates to increased intentions to quit. Accordingly, we suggest that low informational justice in the context of adverse organizational changes can increase organizational cynicism and, indirectly, employee exit intentions. Exit intentions are an important organizational outcome because prior research has demonstrated strong associations with withdrawal from and termination of one's relationship with the organization, which is costly to the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2007). In addition, when expressed publicly among co-workers, exit intentions can elicit important ripple effects with deleterious consequences for organizations (Felps et al., 2009; Mai, Ellis, Christian, &

Porter, 2016). According to Felps et al. (2009; p. 546) ‘when an employee’s co-worker engages in behaviours antecedent to leaving a job, these activities sometimes spill over onto others in such a way that the affected others are more likely to leave’.

Consistent with our first hypothesis regarding the moderating role of organizational identification, employees who highly identify with their organization are especially motivated to understand why and how the changes will occur, and as a result attend and react to informational justice more strongly by becoming cynical and eventually wanting to leave the organization. In contrast, employees who are less identified with the organization have less positive expectations of the organization to begin with. In this case, layoffs and wage cuts are less unexpected and uncertainty provoking, which in turn should attenuate the effect of information justice on cynicism, and in turn on exit intentions. Accordingly, we propose the following moderated-mediation hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. The indirect relationship between informational justice and exit intentions via organizational cynicism will be stronger for employees with higher levels of organizational identification.

Overview of Studies 1–3

We tested our model using a multi-method approach (Cook & Campbell, 1979). In Study 1, we solicited reactions of a diverse sample of US employees to a hypothetical scenario, which allowed us to manipulate the antecedent variables. In Study 2, we provided a test of external validity by administering a questionnaire to 1,795 employees of a European organization undergoing a major restructuring involving layoffs. Finally, in Study 3, we tested our model in a five-wave study using a heterogeneous sample of 174 US workers experiencing layoffs and wage cuts. Table 1 provides an overview of the three studies.

STUDY 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine the causal effects of the antecedent variables of interest – informational justice and organizational identification – on cynicism, and in turn exit intentions, in the context of a hypothetical change scenario. Our primary goal was to ensure internal validity by assessing whether the predicted effects *can* occur (Mook, 1983).

Participants and procedure

Eighty US workers were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and completed the study in exchange for \$1 USD. Two respondents failed one or more attention checks, and their data were not included. The final sample consisted of 78 respondents, of which 32 were females and 46 were males. Average age was 31 years ($SD = 8.12$), average work experience was 11 years ($SD = 6.97$), and approximately 70% of the respondents had an undergraduate degree or higher.

Study 1 was a 2×2 between-subjects design using experimental vignette methodology (EVM; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Bradley & Aguinis, 2018). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions: low versus high informational justice crossed with low versus high organizational identification. After reading a scenario

Table 1. Overview of the studies

	Variables
Study 1 N = 78 Experiment	Work experience, gender, and age (e.g., McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1993). Informational Justice (Manipulated; coded as +1 for high and -1 for low) Organizational Identification (Manipulated; coded as +1 for high and -1 for low) Organizational Cynicism, five items from Pugh et al. (2003), $\alpha = .93$ Exit Intentions, five items from Rusbult et al. (1988), $\alpha = .96$
Study 2 N = 1795 Survey (Single organization undergoing layoffs)	Tenure, gender, and age (e.g., Kulik et al., 1996; Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1993). Negative Affect, 5 items adapted from Watson and Clark (1999), $\alpha = .90$ Informational Justice, 4 items adapted from Colquitt (2001), $\alpha = .75$ Organizational Identification, 3 items from Mael and Ashforth (1992), $\alpha = .87$ Organizational Cynicism, 4 items from Pugh et al. (2003), $\alpha = .78$ Exit Intentions, 2 items from Rusbult et al. (1988), $\alpha = .80$
Study 3 N = 174 Survey (Multi-wave)	Tenure, gender, and age (T0) (e.g., Kulik et al., 1996; Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1993). Negative Affect (T0), 10 items from Watson and Clark (1999), $\alpha = .91$ Organizational Identification (T1), six items from Mael and Ashforth (1992), $\alpha = .90$ Informational Justice (T2), five items from Colquitt (2001), $\alpha = .90$ Interpersonal Justice (T2), four items from Colquitt (2001), $\alpha = .91$ Procedural Justice (T2), seven items from Colquitt (2001), $\alpha = .88$ Distributive Justice (T2), four items from Colquitt (2001), $\alpha = .98$ Organizational Cynicism (T3), five items from Pugh et al. (2003), $\alpha = .94$ Trust (T3), four items from Mayer and Davis (1999), $\alpha = .80$ Exit Intentions (T4), five items from Rusbult et al. (1988), $\alpha = .96$

regarding a crisis faced by an organization called PARKOT, participants were asked to put themselves in the position of a PARKOT employee facing possible layoffs and wage cuts. They then answered questions relating to the scenario. The complete scenario is provided in the Appendix. In the low informational justice condition, information was not shared with employees regarding when layoffs would occur or the criteria that would be used to decide who would be laid off and who would receive pay cuts. In the high informational justice condition, specific criteria used in determining who would be laid off and how wage cuts would be implemented were communicated to employees.

To vary organizational identification, we followed Mael and Ashforth's (1992) operationalization and followed the guidelines for designing EVM scenarios by Aguinis and Bradley (2014) and Bradley and Aguinis (2018). Namely, while adopting the role as an employee in the scenario, participants (in the high vs. low identification conditions respectively) read that they 'cared a lot/did not care at all' about what other people thought of PARKOT, that they 'felt personally insulted/never felt personally insulted' when people said bad things about PARKOT, and that each success of PARKOT 'felt like/did not feel like' their own success.

Independent Variables

Informational Justice (manipulated)

The high and low informational justice conditions were coded as +1 and –1 respectively.

Organizational Identification (manipulated)

The high and low organizational identification conditions were coded as +1 and –1 respectively.

Manipulation checks

Informational justice

We checked our manipulation of informational justice with Colquitt's (2001) 5-item subscale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). Sample items included 'Was communication with you candid (honest and open)?' and 'Information regarding layoffs and wage cuts was received in a timely manner'. Respondents answered using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (to a very small extent) to 7 (to a very large extent).

Organizational identification

We checked our manipulation of organizational identification by asking participants to respond to an item (see Schuh et al., 2016) that asked them to choose between one of the following statements: 'In the above situation, I identified closely with PARKOT' (coded = +1) and 'In the above situation, I did not identify closely with PARKOT' (coded = –1).

Measures

Cynicism

Cynicism was measured using the 5-item Organizational Cynicism Scale (Pugh et al., 2003). Sample items included 'When my company says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen' and 'I see little similarity between what my company says it will do and what it actually does'. Respondents answered using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (to a very small extent) to 7 (to a very large extent) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$).

Exit intentions

We used five items from Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, and Mainous (1988) to measure respondents' exit intentions. Items included 'If everything goes as planned, I will start working in another organization within an year' and 'I often think about applying for a job elsewhere'. Respondents answered using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$).

Control variables

We controlled for participant work experience, gender, and age because these demographic variables have been shown to affect perceptions of organizational justice

and exit intentions (Kulik, Lind, Ambrose, & MacCoun, 1996; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). The results of the study do not change if the demographic control variables are excluded from the analyses. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Results

Informational justice and identification manipulation checks

As expected, participants in the low informational justice condition perceived significantly lower informational justice ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.32$; $n = 39$) compared to those in the high informational justice condition ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.33$; $n = 39$, $t(76) = 7.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.63$). In addition, all participants in the high organizational identification ($n = 41$) and low organizational identification conditions ($n = 37$) correctly identified their level of identification. Thus, our experimental manipulations were successful.

Hypothesis 1. As shown in Table 3, the interaction between informational justice and organizational identification was a significant predictor of cynicism ($b = -.32$, $p = .031$; organizational cynicism model). Simple slope analyses indicated that the association between informational justice and cynicism was negative and significant for the respondents in the high organizational identification condition (+1 SD; $b = -.71$, $p < .001$; see Figure 2); in contrast, the same relationship was not significant for respondents in the low organizational identification condition (-1 SD; $b = -.05$, $p = .791$).

Hypothesis 2. We tested whether organizational identification moderates the influence of informational justice on exit intentions via cynicism using the procedures for moderated-mediation regression outlined by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) and Hayes (2013). Regarding the mediating role of cynicism on the relationship between informational justice and exit intentions (Table 3, exit intentions model), as expected, the effect of cynicism on exit intentions was positive and significant ($b = .61$, $p < .001$), whereas informational justice had no direct effect on exit intentions ($b = -.02$, $p = .913$).

Finally, in support of our moderated-mediation model, the coefficient for the indirect effect of informational justice on exit intentions through cynicism at high levels of organizational identification was negative and significant ($Index = -.43$; $BootLLCI = -.7970$ and $BootULCI = -.1724$)¹, whereas the same indirect effect at low levels of organizational identification was not significant ($Index = -.03$; $BootLLCI = -.3076$ and $BootULCI = .2049$).

Discussion

Study 1 tested the moderated-mediation model, finding support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Specifically, the results showed that the effect of low (vs. high) informational justice on cynicism was significant for participants who strongly identified with the organization.

¹ Because the range between the lower limit confidence interval (LLCI) and the upper limit confidence interval (ULCI) does not include zero, the mediation test is statistically significant.

Table 2. Study 1 – descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α values, and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1 Gender	1.41	.50	—									
2 Work Experience (years)	11.03	6.97	.32**	—								
3 Age (years)	3.81	8.12	.30**	.84***	—							
4 Informational Justice (Manipulated)	.00	1.01	-.05	-.09	-.06	—						
5 Organizational Identification (Manipulated)	.05	1.01	.06	-.14	-.08	-.03	—					
6 Manipulation Check – Informational Justice	3.83	1.70	.07	-.05	.06	.63***	.27*	.93				
7 Manipulation Check – Organizational Identification	.05	1.01	.06	-.14	-.08	-.03	1.00	.27*	—			
8 Organizational Cynicism	3.85	1.51	-.19	-.05	-.14	-.24*	-.39***	-.31**	-.39***	—		
9 Exit Intentions	5.06	1.84	-.10	.10	.07	-.14	-.68***	-.39***	-.68***	-.50***	—	

Note. Gender coded as 1 for female and 2 for male. Informational justice manipulation is coded –1 (low) and +1 (high), while organizational identification manipulation is coded –1 (low) and +1 (high). Cronbach's α values are shown in the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Study I – scenario experiment; test of the moderated-mediation model

Variable	Organizational cynicism			Exit intentions		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value
Constant	5.82***	.80	7.27	2.15	1.26	1.71
Gender	-.46	.32	-1.44	-.22	.40	-.55
Work Experience (years)	.04	.04	.90	.02	.05	.35
Age (years)	-.06	.03	-1.62	.02	.04	.52
Informational Justice Manipulation	-.38*	.15	-2.58	-.02	.19	-.11
Organizational Identification Manipulation	-.58***	.15	-3.89			
Info Justice × Org Ident ^a	-.32*	.15	-2.20			
Organizational Cynicism				.61***	.13	4.63
R ²	.32***			.27***		

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented in all regression Tables. Gender coded as 1 for female and 2 for male. Informational justice manipulation is coded -1 (low) and +1 (high), while organizational identification manipulation is coded -1 (low) and +1 (high).

^aInfo Justice × Org Ident = Informational justice × organizational identification interaction.; **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

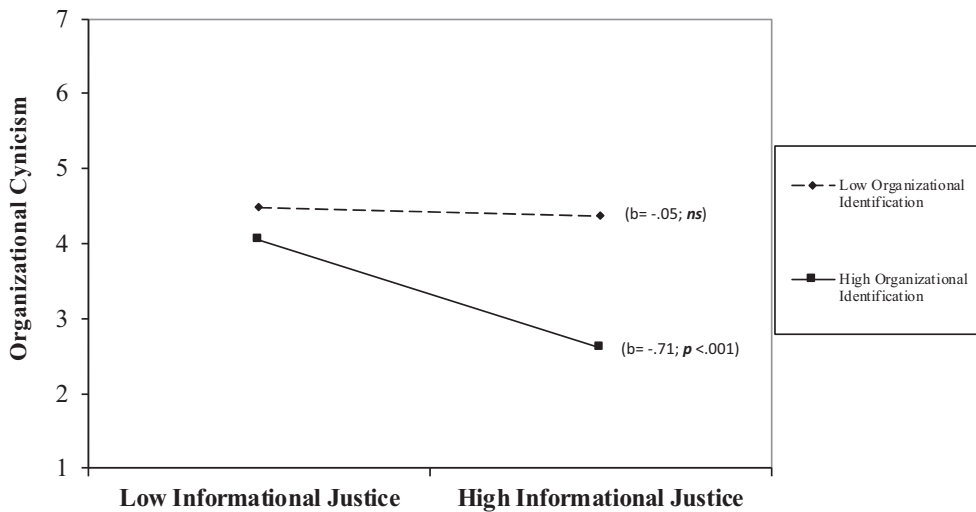


Figure 2. Study I: The moderating effect of organizational identification.

Put differently, explaining (vs. failing to explain) adverse organizational change buffers highly identified employees from becoming cynical towards the organization and intending to leave. One advantage of our experimental vignette methodology (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Bradley & Aguinis, 2018) is that it enabled us to examine whether the predicted effects *can* occur (Mook, 1983), while maximizing internal validity. Although the scenario was designed to be sufficiently detailed and realistic to enable participants to project themselves into the situation, it is nevertheless a hypothetical situation. Study 2 was designed to overcome this limitation.

STUDY 2

Study 2 examined the generalizability of Study 1 (whether the effects *do* occur; Mook, 1983). Specifically, we used a field survey to (a) test our hypotheses in an organization facing real adverse change, and (b) control for other variables that may influence our findings, in particular negative affect.

Participants and procedure

A questionnaire was administered at a Finnish subsidiary of a large Northern European telecommunications service provider. The subsidiary had gone through a long period of turbulence, including a merger with another major Northern European provider, rapid technological transformation in the industry, restructurings aimed at making the organization more digital and service oriented, and multiple rounds of layoffs. In the 3 years prior to this study, 1,035 jobs (approximately 17% of the original 6,000 employees) had been terminated. While the layoffs did not affect all parts of the organization equally, the restructuring efforts affected the whole organization. For example, different units of the organization were combined, job roles and titles were changed due to the technological transformation, and measures facilitating culture change were taken (including revising the organization's values and developing a new logo). In addition, voluntary turnover had increased across the organization. As a result of repeated change efforts and continuing downsizing pressures, the company also regularly received negative publicity in national media.

We sent an electronic questionnaire to 4,000 employees of the company together with a cover e-mail that assured confidentiality. Employees were asked to respond to questions regarding the round of layoffs and restructuring currently underway. After a final reminder, 2,048 responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 51%. As a result of missing values, we deleted 253 cases from the data set, leaving a final sample of 1,795 employees. The sample was 43% female, with a mean age of 43 years ($SD = 10.54$), and average job tenure of 10 years ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.52$, on a 6-point categorical variable).

Measures

All of the variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'. In order to accommodate the request from company managers to limit work disruption, we reduced the number of items and overall length of the survey. In addition, we slightly modified the measure of informational justice by adapting two items to describe the specific situation and the new organizational structure resulting from the organizational change.

Informational justice

We used two items adapted from Colquitt (2001) to measure informational justice (e.g., 'Information regarding layoffs and wage cuts was received in a timely manner') complemented by two items developed specifically for this context and involving the office (called the Competence Pool) that the organization had created as an interim solution for employees whose positions had been eliminated. The latter items asked participants whether they had *received information* regarding the existence and functioning of this special office (e.g., 'I know enough about the functioning of the Competence Pool') (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$).

Cynicism

Cynicism regarding the organization was again measured using the Organizational Cynicism Scale (Pugh et al., 2003). One of the five items was dropped because of translation problems from English to the original language of the survey. The items included were as follows: 'When my company says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen', 'My company expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another', 'I believe that my company says one thing and does another', and 'I see little similarity between what my company says it will do and what it actually does'. (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Organizational identification

We used three items from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to measure organizational identification: 'When someone criticizes my company, it feels like a personal insult', 'I am very interested in what others think about my company', and 'When someone praises my company, it feels like a personal compliment' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$).

Exit intentions

We used two items from Rusbult et al. (1988) to measure respondents' exit intentions: 'If everything goes as planned, I will start working in another organization within a year' and 'I often think about applying for a job elsewhere'. (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

Control variables

As in Study 1, we controlled for participant gender, age, and tenure because of the relationship that these variables might have with justice perceptions and exit intentions (e.g., see Kulik et al., 1996)². Importantly, to rule out a possible confounding role of negative affect in the relation between justice and cynicism (see Dean et al., 1998), we controlled for negative affect with five items adapted from Watson and Clark (1999) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Test of discriminant validity

The descriptive statistics for the variables are presented in Table 4. A confirmatory factor analysis model was built with all of the latent variables (5 latent constructs and 18 items in total) using LISREL 8.87 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1999). The results showed that the model fits the data well.³ The goodness-of fit statistics for the model were $\chi^2(125) = 671.35, p = .00$, RMSEA = .051, NNFI = .98, CFI = .98, and SRMR = .044. As a check of discriminant validity, we compared our measurement model with alternative plausible CFA models (see Table 5). For example, given their common negative nature, we compared our

² The results do not change if the control variables are excluded.

³ Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values less than or equal to .08, non-normed fit index (NNFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) values greater than or equal to .95, and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) less than or equal to .08 indicate satisfactory models (see Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Marsh, Balla, & Hau, 1996; Marsh & Hovecar, 1985).

Table 4. Study 2 – descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α values, and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.57	.50	—							
2. Tenure (categorical)	3.92	1.52	.00	—						
3. Age (years)	42.84	10.54	-.02	.76**	—					
4. Negative Affect	2.57	.94	-.11**	-.07**	-.11**	.90	—			
5. Informational Justice	2.71	.71	.12**	.05*	.06*	-.22**	.75	—		
6. Organizational Identification	3.77	.80	.01	.20**	.24**	-.25**	.16**	.87	—	
7. Organizational Cynicism	3.22	.82	.01	-.12**	-.16**	.41**	-.31**	-.37**	.78	—
8. Exit Intentions	2.74	1.17	.02	-.26**	-.30**	.43**	-.15**	-.37**	.46**	.80

Note. Gender coded as 1 for female and 2 for male. Tenure was assessed on a 6-point categorical scale (mean value in the table corresponds to approximately 10 years). Cronbach's α values are shown in the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5. Study 2 – confirmatory factor analyses

Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	SRMR	χ^2 Diff
5-factor model (hypothesized CFA model)	671.35	125	.05	.98	.98	.04	–
4-factor model (cynicism and exit intentions together)	1,435.36	129	.08	.94	.95	.06	764.01***
4-factor model (cynicism and negative affect together)	2,475.03	129	.12	.90	.92	.09	1,803.68***
3-factor model (cynicism, negative affect, and exit intentions together)	3,375.78	132	.14	.87	.88	.10	2,704.43***

Note. The hypothesized 5-factor model included the following distinct constructs: informational justice, negative affect, organizational identification, cynicism, and exit intentions. The χ^2 difference (χ^2 diff) test was computed relative to the hypothesized 5-factor model.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

hypothesized 5-factor model with a 4-factor model in which the items of cynicism and negative affect loaded on a single factor. The goodness-of-fit statistics for this model were as follows: χ^2 (129) = 2,475.03, $p = .00$, RMSEA = .12, NNFI = .90, CFI = .92, and SRMR = .095. These results suggest that our 5-factor model fit the data better than the 4-factor model, $\Delta \chi^2$ (4) = 1,803.68, $p < .001$. In addition, the fit of our hypothesized model was better than the fit for alternative plausible CFA 4-factor (e.g., cynicism and exit intentions together because of their negative aspect) or 3-factor (e.g., cynicism, negative affect, and exit intentions together, given their common negative nature) models, thus exhibiting satisfactory discriminant validity for our measures.

Results

Hypothesis 1. As in Study 1, we tested the moderating effect of organizational identification in the relationship between informational justice and cynicism. To reduce potential collinearity, we centred the continuous predictors prior to calculating the interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). Table 6 shows the regressions results with unstandardized coefficients for both the mediator and the outcome models. The results indicate that the interaction between informational justice and organizational identification was a significant predictor of cynicism, our mediator ($b = -.08$, $p = .002$; organizational cynicism model). The simple slope analyses indicated that the association between informational justice and cynicism was stronger for employees with high levels of organizational identification (+ 1 SD; $b = -.30$, $p < .001$; see Figure 3) compared to employees with low levels of organizational identification (–1 SD; $b = -.17$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2. Next, we investigated whether organizational identification moderates the mediational effect of organizational cynicism on the relationship between informational justice and exit intentions. As shown in the exit intentions model, the effect of cynicism on exit intentions was positive and significant ($b = .44$, $p < .001$), whereas informational justice had no direct effect on exit intentions ($b = -.03$, $p = .433$). Finally, in support of

Table 6. Study 2 – field study, test of the moderated-mediation model

Variable	Organizational Cynicism			Exit Intentions		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value
Constant	2.52***	.11	24.16	1.21***	.17	7.20
Gender	.12***	.03	3.58	.11*	.05	2.33
Tenure (categorical)	-.00	.02	-.15	-.07**	.02	-2.96
Age	-.00	.00	-1.49	-.02***	.00	-5.01
Negative Affect	.26***	.02	14.43	.37***	.03	13.66
Informational Justice	-.23***	.02	-9.80	.03	.03	.78
Organizational Identification	-.26***	.02	-11.97			
Info Justice × Org Ident *	-.08**	.03	-3.06			
Organizational Cynicism				.44***	.03	13.66
<i>R</i> ²	.29***			.33***		

Note. Gender coded as 1 for female and 2 for male. Tenure was assessed on a 6-point categorical scale (mean value in the table corresponds to approximately 10 years).

*Informational Justice × Organizational Identification interaction.; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

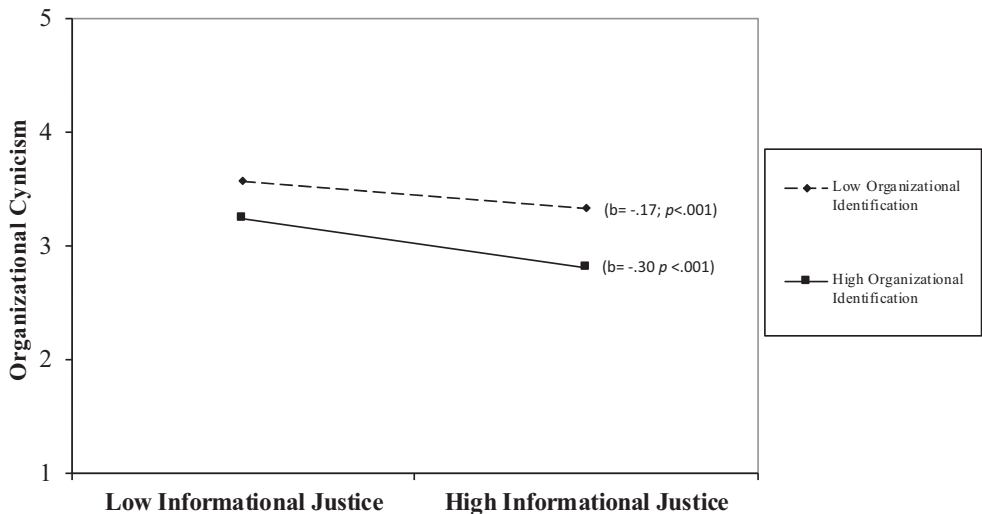


Figure 3. Study 2: The moderating effect of organizational identification.

our moderated-mediation model, the coefficient for the indirect effect (5,000 bootstrap resamples) of informational justice on exit intentions through cynicism at high levels of organizational identification (Index = $-.13$; BootLLCI = $-.1702$ and BootULCI = $-.0977$) was greater than the coefficient for the indirect effect at low levels of organizational identification (Index = $-.07$; BootLLCI = $-.1070$ and BootULCI = $-.0398$). In sum, highly identified employees experienced higher cynicism as a result of low informational justice, and in turn higher exit intentions.

Discussion

Study 2 extended and replicated our Study 1 findings regarding the interactive effect of informational justice and organizational identification within the context of an organization undergoing an adverse change. In addition, our findings indicated that the interaction between informational justice and organizational identification explained variance in organizational cynicism over and above any confounding effects of negative affect.

Although the findings of Study 2 are important, the study may be limited by our use of shortened measures, as well as by the cross-sectional design, which raises the possibility of common method variance inflating the correlations. Although common method bias is less likely to be a concern given that we controlled for negative affect and observed the predicted two-way interaction effect (see Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010), we conducted another field survey using a time-lagged design.

STUDY 3

The purpose of Study 3 was threefold. First, we assessed the variables of interest across five different points in time to attenuate the possible role of common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Second, given that perceptions of the four facets of justice are often significantly correlated (e.g., see Colquitt, 2001; Karam et al., 2019), we examined the unique effect of informational justice by measuring and controlling for the other types of justice (interpersonal, procedural, and distributive justice; see Skarlicki et al., 2008). Third, we followed up participants to gauge the longer-term effects of cynicism on actual turnover.

Participants and procedure

Working adults were recruited through the paid data panel collection service Cloudresearch.com (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017) to participate in a five-wave survey. Participants had indicated in a pre-screen survey that they were experiencing layoffs and wage cuts in their companies, which included multiple job positions being eliminated, substantial downsizing, semi-forced early retirements, termination of entire departments, and wage cuts of up to 20%, among others⁴. According to spontaneously disclosed details by the respondents, these adverse changes were taking place because of increased market competition, organizational restructuring, job outsourcing, economic crisis, and loss of important clients, among many reasons. The 437 participants worked in a variety of industries, including retail, technology, financial services, medical, utilities, and manufacturing. Demographic characteristics and trait negative affect of the respondents were collected in a preliminary wave (Time 0). Organizational identification was assessed at Time 1, informational, interpersonal, procedural, and distributive justice at Time 2, organizational cynicism at Time 3, and exit intentions at Time 4. The reliabilities of the measures are shown in Table 7. On average, 4 weeks separated each wave of data collection. Thus, the timing not only helps to minimize common method bias but also provides a realistic timeframe to study employee reactions during a period of adverse change (layoffs and wage cuts). Of the 174 respondents who completed all five waves, 51% were female, the mean age was 38 years

⁴A sample of quotes describing these adverse changes, which were reported by respondents, is provided in the Appendix for interested readers.

Table 7. Study 3 – Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α values, and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1.51	.50	–										
2. Tenure (categorical)	2.28	1.28	.01	–									
3. Age (years)	37.57	11.08	.21**	.42**	–								
4. Negative Affect	1.68	.84	.00	–.15*	–.21**	.91							
5. Procedural Justice	3.28	1.26	–.02	–.03	–.15*	–.03	.88						
6. Distributive Justice	2.78	1.63	.03	.04	–.10	–.01	.56**	.98					
7. Interpersonal Justice	4.81	1.46	–.05	.01	–.11	–.16*	.65**	.45**	.91				
8. Informational Justice	3.42	1.52	.03	.00	–.10	–.08	.79**	.52**	.64**	.90			
9. Organizational Identification	3.93	1.47	.04	.05	–.05	.05	.40**	.35**	.44**	.42**	.90		
10. Organizational Cynicism	4.49	1.48	–.07	–.03	–.02	.10	–.57**	–.38**	–.57**	–.56**	–.43**	.94	
11. Exit Intentions	4.64	1.79	–.04	–.22**	–.19*	.18*	–.39**	–.29**	–.38**	–.42**	–.34**	.53**	.96

Note. Gender coded as 1 for male and 2 for female. Tenure was assessed on a 5-point categorical scale (mean value in the table corresponds to approximately 5 years). Cronbach's α values are shown in the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

($SD = 11.08$), and average job tenure was 5 years ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.28$, 5-point categorical variable).⁵

Measures

All variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '7 = strongly agree' and referred to the ongoing layoffs and wage cuts experienced by the respondents.

Informational justice

Informational justice was measured with five items from Colquitt (2001) referring to the cost cutting measures experienced by the respondents (e.g., 'Information regarding the layoffs and wage cuts was received in a timely manner') (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Cynicism

As in our previous two studies, cynicism regarding the employing organization was measured using five items from the Organizational Cynicism Scale (Pugh et al., 2003) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Organizational identification

We used the six items from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to measure organizational identification (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Exit intentions

We again used five items from Rusbult et al. (1988) to measure respondents' exit intentions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$).

Control variables

We again controlled for participant gender, age, tenure, and negative affect (10 items adapted from Watson & Clark, 1999; Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$)⁶. Importantly, following previous research testing the unique role of informational justice (Skarlicki et al., 2008), we also assessed and controlled for other types of justice using Colquitt's (2001) scale measuring employee perceptions of interpersonal justice (four items; $\alpha = .91$), procedural justice (seven items, $\alpha = .88$), and distributive justice (four items; $\alpha = .98$).

Test of discriminant validity

Descriptive statistics and correlations among all the variables are shown in Table 7. A confirmatory factor analysis model was built with all the latent variables used in the study

⁵ The attrition rate was, thus, 40%. Participants who completed all data collection waves were not significantly different in terms of gender, while they were slightly older (3 years, $p < .01$) and longer tenured (1 year, $p < .05$) compared to those who did not complete all the waves.

⁶ The results do not change if the control variables are excluded.

(8 latent constructs and 46 items in total). The results showed that the model fit the data well: $\chi^2(961) = 1883.11$, $p = .00$, RMSEA = .072, NNFI = .95, CFI = .96, and SRMR = .061. As in Study 3, we compared our measurement model with alternative plausible CFA models. The results of the χ^2 test indicated that our hypothesized 8-factor model had a better fit than a 7-factor model in which the items of informational and interpersonal justice loaded on the same factor ($\Delta\chi^2(7) = 345.22$, $p < .001$). Similarly, our hypothesized model exhibited a better fit than a 7-factor model where the items of informational and procedural justice loaded on a single factor ($\Delta\chi^2(7) = 67.55$, $p < .001$). Overall, the fit of our hypothesized model was better than the fit for alternative plausible CFA models – including a 5-factor model wherein the items of the four dimensions of justice loaded on the same factor – thus, supporting the discriminant validity of our measures (see Table 8).

Results

Hypothesis 1. As shown in Table 9, the interaction between informational justice and organizational identification was a significant predictor of organizational cynicism ($b = -.08$, $p = .029$; organizational cynicism model). Consistent with the results of Study 1 and Study 2, simple slope analyses indicated that the association between informational justice and cynicism was negative and significant for highly identified employees (+ 1 SD; $b = -.23$, $p = .029$; see Figure 4), whereas the same relationship was not significant for employees low in organizational identification (-1 SD; $b = .00$, $p = .974$).

Hypothesis 2. Finally, in support of our moderated-mediation model, the coefficient for the indirect effect of informational justice on exit intentions through cynicism at high levels of organizational identification was negative and significant (+ 1 SD; effect = $-.11$; BootLLCI = $-.2387$ and BootULCI = $-.0232$), whereas the same indirect effect at low levels of organizational identification was not significant (-1 SD; effect = $.00$; BootLLCI = $-.1116$ and BootULCI = $.1173$).

Follow-up: Predicting actual turnover from exit intentions

One plausible concern regarding our set of studies might involve the use of exit intentions as dependent variable rather than turnover behaviour. Although we specifically focused on employee exit intentions because they matter from a practical viewpoint, evidence that exit intentions related to actual voluntary exit would underscore the importance of our findings. For this reason, we conducted a follow-up survey to complement our results for employee exit intentions with data regarding actual turnover behaviour. Specifically, 1 year and 6 months after the last wave of our survey (Wave 5), we contacted through the same paid panel service the 174 respondents from the final sample who had completed all five waves. We asked the respondents whether they still worked at the same company or had left, and in the latter case, whether they had left the company voluntarily.

In addition, they responded to an open-ended question asking why they had left the organization. Of the 174 respondents in Wave 5, 105 agreed to participate in our follow-up survey, for a response rate of over 60%. Of these 105 respondents, 8 were excluded because they were not able to recall the specific job title that they reported in the previous

Table 8. Study 3 – confirmatory factor analyses

Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	SRMR	χ^2 Diff
8-factor model (hypothesized CFA model)	1,883.11	961	.07	.95	.96	.06	-
7-factor model (informational and procedural justice together)	1,950.66	968	.08	.95	.95	.06	67.55***
7-factor model (informational and interpersonal justice together)	2,228.33	968	.09	.94	.94	.08	345.22***
7-factor model (cynicism and exit intentions together)	2,484.49	968	.10	.93	.93	.10	601.38***
7-factor model (cynicism and negative affect together)	2,753.18	968	.11	.91	.92	.17	870.07***
6-factor model (cynicism, negative affect, and exit intentions together)	3,704.92	974	.16	.87	.87	.20	1,821.81***
5-factor model (informational, interpersonal, procedural, and distributive justice together)	3,227.47	979	.12	.89	.90	.08	1,344.36***

Note. The hypothesized 8-factor model included the following distinct constructs: informational justice, interpersonal justice, procedural justice, distributive justice, negative affect, organizational identification, cynicism, and exit intentions. The χ^2 difference (χ^2 diff) test was computed relatively to the hypothesized 8-factor model.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

wave, and 2 others were excluded because they indicated that they had left their company due to unavoidable non-job-related reasons (i.e., one was family related, to parental caring, and the other was medical related). In addition, 12 employees indicated that they had left the company involuntarily, including due to business divestiture or layoffs. As we were unable to relate their prior cynicism and exit intentions to voluntary exit, and had no reason to believe they would be more or less likely than other study participants to voluntarily exit had they not been forced to do so, we excluded these employees from our analysis. Of the remaining 83 participants, 16 reported that they had voluntarily left their company.

For the analysis, employees who voluntarily left were coded as 1, while stayers were coded as 0. To examine whether exit intentions significantly predicted actual turnover behaviour, we conducted an independent samples *t*-test to examine whether employees who voluntarily left their companies (compared to those who stayed) had on average higher exit intentions 18 months earlier.

As expected, participants who had voluntarily left the company had shown significantly higher exit intentions (Wave 5; $M = 5.51$, $SD = 1.55$) than those who were still employed in their company ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.87$), $t(81) = 2.47$, $p = .015$, $d = .55$. In addition, consistent with the full mediating role of exit intentions on the relationship between cynicism and turnover, there were no statistically significant differences in terms of cynicism between the stayers (Wave 4; $M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.57$) and employees who left their company ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.18$, $t(81) = 1.60$, $p = .114$, $d = .48$).⁷ In fact, although

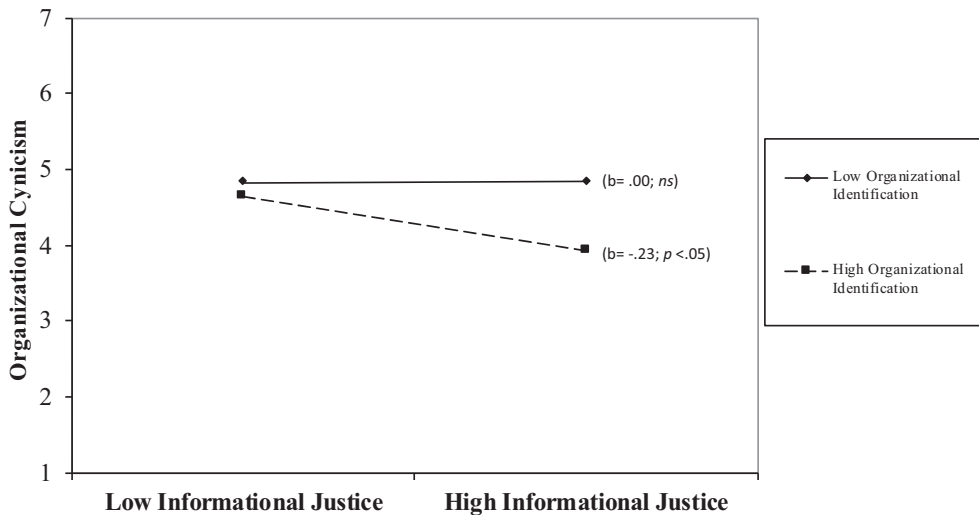
⁷ Given the need to maintain a reasonable ratio between the number of observations and variables included in the model (5:1, see Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009), and in light of the reduced sample size for turnover behaviour, we could not test the full model including the predictor (i.e., informational justice), mediator (i.e., cynicism), moderator (organizational identification), interaction term (i.e., Informational Justice \times Organizational Identification), and control variables (i.e., interactional, procedural, and distributive justice, negative affect, tenure, age, and gender).

Table 9. Study 3 – multi-wave field study, test of the moderated-mediation model

Variable	Organizational Cynicism (T3)			Exit Intentions (T4)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value
Constant	7.36***	.69	10.62	4.00**	1.16	3.45
Gender (T0)	-.12	.18	-.69	.04	.23	.15
Tenure (T0)	.04	.08	.53	-.19	.10	-1.91
Age (T0)	-.01	.01	-1.51	-.02	.01	-1.87
Negative Affect (T0)	.00	.11	.03	.15	.14	1.10
Procedural Justice (T2)	-.27**	.12	-2.19	-.05	.16	-.32
Distributive Justice (T2)	.00	.07	-.05	-.05	.08	-.56
Interpersonal Justice (T2)	-.27**	.08	-3.27	-.04	.11	-.40
Informational Justice (T2)	-.11	.10	-1.18	-.16	.13	-1.24
Organizational Identification (T1)	-.19**	.07	-2.83			
Info Justice × Org Ident ^a	-.08*	.04	-2.19			
Organizational Cynicism (T3)				.47***	.10	4.73
R ²	.46***			.37***		

Note. Gender coded as 1 for male and 2 for female. Tenure was assessed on a 5-point scale (mean value corresponds to approximately 5 years).

^aInformational Justice × Organizational Identification interaction.; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

**Figure 4.** Study 3: The moderating effect of organizational identification

we could not test the relationship among cynicism, exit intentions, and actual turnover in a moderated-mediation model, a simple test of serial mediation shows that these results are in line with our predictions. Specifically, the index of mediation (Hayes, 2015) for the following indirect path '*Informational Justice* → *Organizational Cynicism* → *Exit Intentions* → *Turnover*' was significant (*Index* = $-.1421$; *BootLLCI* = $-.4249$ and

BootULCI= $-.0157$), thereby indicating the crucial role of exit intentions in translating organizational cynicism into employee turnover.

Discussion

The purpose of Study 3 was threefold. First, to attenuate the possible role of common method variance, we assessed the variables of interest across five different points in time (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, given that perceptions of the four facets of justice are correlated (e.g., see Colquitt, 2001; Karam et al., 2019), we examined the unique effect of informational justice by measuring and controlling for the other types of justice (interpersonal, procedural, and distributive justice; see procedure used by Skarlicki et al., 2008). Third, we followed up participants to gauge the longer-term effects of informational justice, cynicism, and exit intentions on actual turnover. Thus, the findings of Study 3 corroborate, generalize, and extend our previous findings regarding the interactive effect of informational justice and organizational identification on cynicism and exit intentions.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, our research suggests that organizations can reduce organizational cynicism during times of adverse change through the provision of explanations, and it provides insights into which employees are likely to be most affected by a lack of proper communication. The palliative effect of informational justice is especially pronounced among employees who strongly identify with the organization; we observed this consistently across multiple studies using different research methodologies and designs. Study 1 used an experimental vignette paradigm that permits causal inference, whereas Studies 2 and 3 reveal external validity by using field survey methodology within the context of ongoing organizational change. We also ruled out the possible confounding role of negative affect (Studies 2 and 3), and show the unique effect of informational justice over and above distributive, procedural, and interpersonal justice perceptions (Study 3). Finally, our supplementary follow-up analysis in Study 3 confirms the practical importance of our research by showing that organizational cynicism predicted actual subsequent turnover behaviour through exit intentions.

Theoretical contributions

With our research we make three primary theoretical contributions. First, by investigating the joint effect of informational justice and organizational identification on organizational cynicism, and through cynicism on exit intentions, we extend understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Cole et al., 2004; Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). While previous research has hinted at the role of communication in influencing cynicism in the context of organizational change (Bernerth et al., 2007; Fitzgerald, 2002), we systematically examined the role of informational justice as an antecedent, as well as demonstrating for whom it matters most (those who are highly identified with the organization). Importantly, we also address calls to examine the crucial mediational role of cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013) by demonstrating how cynicism can channel the joint effect of informational justice and organizational identification on exit intentions. Specifically,

our research indicates that organizations may lose valued employees in the context of adverse change when they fail to provide adequate explanations and proper information – employees who are otherwise highly identified can become cynical, and eventually leave the organization.

Past research on justice and organizational change has tended to highlight the beneficial effects of procedural justice on work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and commitment; e.g., Kernan & Hanges, 2002). In contrast, we focused on informational justice because it is conceptually most directly related to cynicism, which was the mediator of focus in our research. As noted in the introduction, this is because informational justice is perceived as more discretionary than procedural justice (Scott et al., 2009). Hence, it is considered as more diagnostic of the organization's motives and intentions, judgments which are directly relevant for the formation of cynicism. Following previous research by Skarlicki et al. (2008), in Study 3, we confirmed the unique role of informational justice by measuring and testing the other justice perceptions. In addition, in the same study, we conducted a supplementary analysis to examine whether procedural justice (which is the most closely related justice perception) also interacts with organizational identification on organizational cynicism. This latter interaction was not significant ($b = -.07$, $p = .10$) and remained non-significant regardless of whether control variables or other types of justice were included in the model. These findings indicate that in terms of cynicism in the context of adverse change, organizational identification and informational justice have a unique interactive role. Our findings, therefore, corroborate recent recommendations by Conroy et al. (Conroy, Becker, et al., 2017; Conroy, Henle, et al., 2017) that 'organizational leaders should communicate information addressing employees' concerns and interests during change efforts' (p. 198). Our findings highlight the serious consequences of failing to do so.

Second, we add to an emerging and broader understanding of organizational identification during adverse changes (Conroy, Henle, et al., 2017) by showing that organizational identification functions as a double-edged sword during layoffs and wage cuts. It is both a buffer, in the sense that it can mitigate cynicism, but it also increases employee sensitivity to the lack of informational justice. Specifically, when organizations fail to explain adverse changes, employees who are strongly identified become as cynical as those who are less identified. In doing so, we respond to the call by Conroy, Becker, et al. (2017) and Conroy, Henle, et al. (2017) for more scholarly research on into potential dark sides of organizational identification.

Third, we contribute to the broader organizational justice literature. Historically, there has been less emphasis on understanding the consequences of informational justice as compared to distributive, procedural, and interpersonal justice (Skarlicki et al., 2008). Generally, existing research suggests that informational justice is uniformly beneficial. Yet, little work has examined when and why informational justice may have stronger, or weaker, effects on important employee outcomes. Our findings point to a possible boundary condition for predicting cynicism in the context of adverse change, namely organizational identification. Our finding that informational justice affected cynicism most among employees whose identities are intertwined with the organization and not among less identified employees sheds light on why informational justice matters. This finding suggests that different facets of justice may be more important to different groups of employees, depending on their relationship with the organization, and consequently trigger different reactions among them. In our research, highly identified employees

attached importance to open and comprehensive communication in the context of adverse change, and in its absence, they were at higher risk of becoming cynical.

Limitations and future research

An overarching strength of our research is that we tested our hypotheses using a multi-method approach (Cook & Campbell, 1979), encompassing one experimental study, one large-scale survey within a single organization, and one multi-wave survey entailing five points of data collection. Thus, weaknesses from any single methodology are offset by observing convergence across the combination of methods. Nevertheless, our research has limitations that are important to note, some of which also suggest interesting avenues for further investigation.

First, drawing on UMT, we theorized that informational justice would be more important for highly identified employees (vs. less highly identified employees) because of the greater uncertainty experienced by the former group in layoffs and wage cut situations. More specifically, we reasoned that adverse changes create uncertainty regarding the quality of employees' relationship with the organization, which is more important and central to the identity of highly identified employees. Not only should highly identified employees care more about their relationship with the organization than those less highly identified but also they may perceive the adverse events as more unexpected, and thus such events might create more uncertainty for them. Nevertheless, despite our theorizing regarding the central role of uncertainty in underlying our predictions, we did not directly measure uncertainty.

Although some studies drawing on UMT and on its predecessor fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 2001; Lind et al., 2001) have either primed (e.g., Van den Bos, 2001), manipulated (Van den Bos et al., 1998), or directly measured (e.g., Van den Bos, Schie & Colenberg, 2002) uncertainty, often with regard to the trustworthiness of an authority, other studies have tested the implications of the theory without directly assessing uncertainty as a mediator. For example, in research examining the effects of mortality salience on the importance of fairness, mortality salience has been manipulated without directly examining uncertainty (e.g., Van den Bos & Miedema, 2000). We followed the latter strategy because our focus was on cynicism in a context described by Lind and Van den Bos (2002) as especially likely to provoke feelings of uncertainty among employees. Interestingly, in Studies 2 and 3, we included a non-mandatory open-text question inviting employees to comment on their experiences relating to the organizational changes, and many spontaneously mentioned the strong uncertainty they were experiencing (these comments are provided in Appendix for interested readers). Although these data are not definitive, they are in line with UMT assumptions regarding the uncertainty provoking character of adverse change. Similarly, it is likely that certain employees might have been worried or psychologically affected more than others by the negative organizational change. For this reason, we collected and controlled for respondents' negative affect both in Studies 2 and 3, thereby ruling out its possible confounding role. Furthermore, the low variability in ratings of negative affect in both studies highlights relatively homogeneous feelings among employees (Study 2, $SD = .94$; Study 3, $SD = .84$) and should, therefore, attenuate these concerns.

A second limitation is that our research focused on understanding the antecedents of cynicism and the role of cynicism in mediating their effect on exit intentions. Research should also examine other constructs that may mediate the interactive effects of informational justice and organizational identification on employee exit intentions.

For example, different aspects of cynicism could be investigated as possible mediators, including emotions such as anger and contempt (Dean et al., 1998). Research might also investigate cynicism towards different targets. If, for example, cynicism was directed at an entire industry rather than a particular organization, perhaps its relation to exit intentions would be reduced or eliminated. Similarly, future research should examine other outcomes of organizational cynicism than exit intentions. For example, there may be decreases in performance or citizenship behaviours and increases in counterproductive work behaviours or deviance.

In addition, research might investigate alternative constructs that could mediate the relation between informational justice (and organizational identification), exit intentions, and other important employee variables. For example, trust and organizational cynicism are two concepts that are traditionally considered as opposite ends of a continuum, and yet are distinct albeit negatively related (Chiaburu et al., 2013). In fact, while trust involves *specific* 'expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another's future actions will be beneficial, favourable, or at least not detrimental to one's interests' (Robinson, 1996, p. 576), cynicism is often defined as a *general* 'attitude associated with disillusionment and negative feelings toward and distrust of another person or an organization' (Pugh et al., 2003, p. 203). Accordingly, previous findings (Chiaburu et al., 2013) suggest that trust may provide an alternative explanatory mechanism to cynicism. For this reason, in Study 3, we assessed employee trust in addition to organizational cynicism and re-ran our moderated-mediation model, adding trust as an additional mediator (measured with four items from Mayer & Davis, 1999; Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$). In contrast to cynicism, trust was not significantly influenced by the interaction of informational justice and organizational identification ($b = .01, p = .811$). While organizational cynicism significantly influenced exit intentions ($b = .41, p < .001$), trust had no significant effect on exit intentions ($b = -.15, p = .238$).

The results of these additional tests (reported in the Appendix Tables A1–A3, for interested readers) confirm the role of organizational cynicism as a mechanism through which informational justice affects exit intentions among employees who identify more strongly with their organization. Nevertheless, future research focusing on social exchanges during adverse organizational changes might unveil interesting findings for the mediating role of trust on important employee reactions, such as performance, acceptance of change, and feelings of control.

A third limitation of our studies is the primary focus on predicting employee's intentions to leave the organization, rather than actual turnover behaviour. We did so in light of decades of research on the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975), which has demonstrated that behaviours are strongly influenced by behavioural intentions. Moreover, prior organizational research has shown that exit intentions are a strong predictor of exit behaviour (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Indeed, this proved to be the case in our follow-up analyses to Study 3, which showed that exit intentions influenced turnover behaviour 18 months later.

Although we demonstrated support for the model in three different settings, future research is needed to examine the generalizability of our findings across different organizations and different kinds of adverse change. For example, and as noted above, reactions to adverse change may be different when the circumstances leading to it are largely out of control of the organization, as in the case of workplaces closing or reductions in work hours resulting from a global pandemic, such as the Covid-19 outbreak. Future research might also extend our findings on the consequences of cynicism to the healthcare sector in the context of Covid-19, wherein front-line workers

are experiencing great uncertainty and cynicism. In these cases, employees might become less committed and engage more in dysfunctional behaviours, such as silence in the face of faulty safety procedures (Hamstra, Schreurs, Jawahar, Laurijssen, & Hünermund, 2021; Kirrane, O'Shea, Buckley, Grazi, & Prout, 2017; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Relatedly, there may also be situations of repeated or continuous change in which informational justice becomes less effective, even for highly identified employees, in buffering against cynicism. It is also noteworthy that we examined only one specific aspect of informational justice, namely providing people with detailed information about the adverse organizational change (see Colquitt, 2001). Our approach is consistent with justice research that demonstrates that detailed explanations are an important component of informational justice (Greenberg, 1994; Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1994). However, future research might examine whether the effects on organizational cynicism and exit intentions – and the moderating effect of organizational identification – vary according to different types of explanations, such as excuses, justifications, and apologies (see Bies, 1987).

Finally, given the correlational designs of our field studies, our ability to make definitive causal inferences is limited. Although the experimental design of Study 1 enables causal inference regarding the joint effects of our predictors on cynicism, future research might investigate alternative routes of causation (e.g., from cynicism to informational justice, or from exit intentions to cynicism) through methodological designs that might rule out or highlight the iterative effects of cynicism, justice, and identification overtime (e.g., latent growth curve models or differences-in-differences studies). Overall, our multi-method approach (Cook & Campbell, 1979) entailing both experimental and time-lagged designs might attenuate specific concerns regarding the weaknesses of a single-study methodology, as the findings converge across the different methods we used.

Practical implications

Our findings corroborate what change management scholars have long espoused: organizations undergoing change should provide employees with detailed information and high-quality explanations for the change. Our research suggests that failing to do so may lead employees to question the organization's motives for undertaking the change and to become cynical towards the organization.

Moreover, our findings suggest that informational justice is especially important for employees who strongly identify with the organizations. Therefore, organizational communications regarding change should specifically target – or should certainly not overlook – employees with strong organizational identity, aiming to reduce their uncertainty and apprehension regarding the change. This is especially important given the extent to which unwanted voluntary turnover of highly identified personnel can undermine an organization's change efforts and handicap its competitiveness (Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012). Our findings also indicate that explanations will not be as effective in reducing cynicism among employees with low levels of organizational identification. Thus, unsurprisingly, multiple strategies will be needed to effectively reduce cynicism during change among all employees. Although addressing cynicism during change is a complex problem, it is important for organizations to attend to cynicism levels, as evidenced by our findings regarding the effects of cynicism on exit intentions. Moreover, cynicism towards one target (e.g., a leader or an organizational practice) can generalize to other targets (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Pugh et al., 2003), eventually infecting employees with a negative attitude regarding the entire organization.

Interestingly, our findings are particularly relevant from an applied perspective in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in many adverse changes in workplaces worldwide, including wage cuts and layoffs (Borden, Akhtar, & Hadden, 2020; Griffith, 2020). The pandemic has increased uncertainty relating to several important aspects of people's lives, including mortality salience and trustworthiness of authorities and institutions. More importantly, it has affected the quality of employees' relationships with their organizations, making fairness of greater importance than during more certain times. Informational justice may be especially important, as citizens and employees rely on the explanations for negative events affecting them as means of reducing uncertainty. Yet, it is also possible that, in light of external events affecting most if not all organizations and jurisdictions, the effects of explanations and organizational identification might affect employee cynicism differently.

Conclusion

As major organizational changes have become increasingly the norm, improving our understanding of employee reactions to such changes is of paramount importance (Fedor, Caldwell, & Herold, 2006). Unfortunately, employees often become cynical and disillusioned with the organization. Our research demonstrates that by providing detailed information about the change, organizations can reduce cynicism and exit intentions during times of adverse change, especially among highly identified employees.

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Conflicts of interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Francesco Sguera: Conceptualization (equal); Formal analysis (equal); Investigation (equal); Methodology (equal); Project administration (equal); Visualization (equal); Writing – original draft (equal); Writing – review & editing (equal). **David Patient:** Conceptualization (equal); Investigation (equal); Methodology (equal); Writing – original draft (equal); Writing – review & editing (equal). **Marjo-Riitta Diehl:** Conceptualization (equal); Investigation (equal); Methodology (equal); Writing – original draft (equal); Writing – review & editing (equal). **Ramona Bobocel:** Conceptualization (equal); Methodology (equal); Writing – original draft (equal); Writing – review & editing (equal).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Appendix :

Scenarios (Study I)

High organizational identification

You work for a US-based manufacturing organization called PARKOT. You have always identified highly with your organization. You care a lot about how PARKOT is seen by other people and you feel personally insulted when people say bad things about PARKOT. In contrast, every success of PARKOT's feels like your own success.

Low organizational identification

You work for a US-based manufacturing organization called PARKOT. You have never identified closely with the organization. You don't care at all about how PARKOT is seen by other people, and you never feel personally insulted when people say bad things about PARKOT. You don't feel at all that PARKOT's successes are also yours.

Low informational justice

PARKOT is facing difficult economic times as a result of a changing economic environment, increased international competition, and failures in the past to adapt to new technologies.

Following the loss of a key client and departure of some senior executives, there have been rumors regarding a major restructuring. However, the CEO has not shared any information with rank-and-file employees. When you and other employees have asked, you have been told that there is no news.

One day, employees in your department are called together for an “urgent announcement regarding the future of the organization.” The CEO delivers the following speech: “The company is facing difficult circumstances and needs to reduce costs. So PARKOT will reduce wages and will lay off some employees. At this time, information regarding when the layoffs will take place or what criteria will be used to decide who will be laid off or receive wage cuts will not be shared with you. There is also at this time no person or office that employees can contact for further details regarding the layoffs or wage cuts.

Thank you for your support.”

High informational justice

PARKOT is facing difficult economic times as a result of a changing economic environment, increased international competition, and failures in the past to adapt to new technologies.

One day, employees in your department are called together for an “urgent announcement regarding the future of the organization.” The CEO delivers the following speech: “There is some important news regarding the future of PARKOT. I wanted to give you details of upcoming changes that will affect you. I also wanted to explain the reasons for decisions made. I am giving you the details immediately, so that you do not hear the news from elsewhere. As you know, the company is facing difficult circumstances. We face increasing competition and unexpected changes in the company’s technological environment.

As a result, after much discussion, we have decided:

- To cut salaries and wages by 5%. This will be put in place at the beginning of next month. Since employee pay is our biggest cost, this will save enough money to keep the company alive.
- Unfortunately, PARKOT will also lay off 10% of employees in the next two months. This is necessary because we lost our biggest client.
- The layoffs and wage cuts will be done by specific calculations based on criteria such as tenure, performance, age, and gender. So only some employees will be affected. This is what we agreed with the union and what seems most reasonable in a tough situation. All labor agreements and company procedures will be followed to make sure that the layoffs and wage cuts are conducted properly.

To address employees’ concerns regarding the layoffs and wage cuts we have created the Nexus Information Office. All employees can contact the office by phone, by email, or in person. The office will provide detailed information tailored to the employee’s specific situation, to indicate how the employee is likely to be affected by the layoffs or wage cuts.

Thank you for your support.”

Study 3: layoffs and wage cuts – pre-screening quotes

There have been recent rounds of layoffs, contract buyouts, semi-forced early retirements, and salary cuts.

They are laying people off and saying that they are not laying people off, frozen wages, closing departments.

The computer programming is being off-sited to a separate company and many people in the programming departments are losing their jobs.

Half of the people that I work with are being laid off.

Salaries are getting cut and some positions have been eliminated so people are losing their jobs.

Several of us got laid off and others were forced to take a \$1 per hour pay cut.

Management gave themselves huge raises then were forced to lay off workers and cut other workers' pay.

Hourly hours cut by 20% and layoffs.

Well they cut peoples pay me included. I got downgraded a pay grade to save money. About 25% of the staff have been fired.

My company had a bad holiday season and are cutting back 1500 employees nationwide.

They call it reduction in force but people are fired.

Five people have been let go in the past 5 months.

A department is closing and the employees of that department are getting laid off.

Salaries frozen, a hiring freeze, and layoffs/people being let go for performance reasons.

Outsourcing and general layoffs, particularly as a result of mergers and acquisitions.

Budget sbrinking. people being let go.

The company has restructured, so they are eliminating jobs and posting new jobs at lower wages in order to be more efficient.

Salary cuts and layoffs due to downturn.

We are down to the bare minimum at work, with the least amount of employees to do the work. There have been several layoffs within the past 2 years.

Proposed salary cuts and incentives to "take the package" and leave voluntarily.

Multiple quarters with negative revenue caused layoffs to occur.

We lost one major customer which resulted in layoff.

There was a layoff in January and a furlough in December.

Study 2: unsolicited uncertainty quotes

This has been really bad for a long time. You have no certainty about your job and the managers are playing their games with the organizational charts (obviously to keep the guys in the upper management busy, at least it will look nice on their CVs).

Too many changes in the past years, the previous change is not even properly implemented, and we go again for the change.

There are simply too often changes and normal employees have to jump between different initiatives. This such feeds general uncertainty and employees have to change their tasks and roles far too often.

This constant change has made many employee employees really afraid, you see it in team meetings and during coffee breaks when chatting with colleagues. We are

speculating widely about the future and optimists, pessimists and cynics all have their different views.

You have no peace to do your work, you need to all the time "afraid" what happens next

The continuous change is tiring. It would be a blessing to have the peace to do your job properly and without needing to think you or your colleagues will still have a job tomorrow.

You always have to be afraid that you won't keep your job, since years there are regularly changes and layoffs, it just kills you as you know that even if you would do your job as good as you can, you can still lose your job.

Constant organizational changes kill your willingness to be entrepreneurial, there is too much uncertainty.

The constant change forces you to simply play it safe, keep low profile and to ensure your own position, you don't dare to try to be creative at all.

This year I have experienced once time layoff talks, 2 times organizational changes and 2 times a new supervisor. I have the feeling that nobody cares what a chaos this is for those who work here.

There has been so much change in the past could of years, organizational changes, I just wish it would calm down and that we would have some stability.

Those who need to work under these changes, it is no wonder they are no longer coping. Human beings work very badly under uncertainty and ambiguity, even if you were a strong person.

What describes today's word of work is the simple statement, you cannot know about tomorrow, this statement describes today's word of work.

These endless negotiations about job cuts have really frustrated people and have created insecurity. I just hope that in the future we can rely more on our employer and have a greater sense of continuity.

Constant fear about losing my job is really influencing my health.

I feel we do changes for the sake of doing changes. All the time you have to be afraid of your job and even tiny issues start to freak you out.

My general impression is that the workforce here is totally fed up with this constant change and uncertainty whether you can keep your job. Nobody dares to invest himself to his job, as you cannot be sure about your job.

Continuous but short term and unfinished change initiatives have caused mainly hopelessness and uncertainty. Even if some of the changes would have as such been good, the only thing what is certain is that there will be a new change very soon.

A general sense of tiredness and uncertainty describes the current atmosphere at this workplace. A feeling that there is no peace to do your job. I have been working here for 1.5 years, and at the beginning I felt good about it.

I work under daily fear of losing my job. I cannot plan my life due to this uncertainty for longer than three weeks, I am concerned about my loan for my house and I cannot even plan any trips for my holiday.

Study 3: unsolicited uncertainty quotes

There have been layoffs and a general sense of uncertainty. Little or no information is being given with regards to what is happening but something is happening.

Things have stabilized a bit, but they still have no clue what they're doing.

Due to financial difficulties, a strategic resource allocation has been enacted so that all programs in the organization may be reviewed. No one is certain if there will be more salary cuts, but the organization has stated that it cannot guarantee that there won't be layoffs.

This week, 161 staff were laid off. Faculty, who are unionized, are voting on a proposal to take a pay cut that is rather substantial. Other faculty members are unsure whether they will be rehired for next fall.

The first round of positions being eliminated has ended, but increasing pressure from limited state government funding has caused some concern about the possibility of another round of job cuts.

Two weeks ago, a long-time coworker was let go, due to position elimination. I had mixed feelings and it was a stressful transition.

There's been a salary freeze and no raise again this year, and my team was considered for layoffs and I'm not sure if we still are. Some departments have been consolidated with people being offered their jobs in different cities. I'm unsure what is going to happen.

Table A1. Study 3 – parallel mediators model: organizational cynicism and organizational trust (mediator model)

Variable	Organizational cynicism (T3)			Organizational trust (T3)		
	b	SE	t-value	b	SE	t-value
Constant	7.36***	.69	10.62	.89	.64	1.39
Gender (T0)	-.12	.18	-.69	.01	.16	.05
Tenure (T0)	.04	.08	.53	-.02	.07	-.35
Age (T0)	-.01	.01	-1.51	.01	.01	.91
Negative Affect (T0)	.00	.11	.03	-.01	.10	-.09
Procedural Justice (T2)	-.27**	.12	-2.19	.21	.11	1.91
Distributive Justice (T2)	.00	.07	-.05	.12*	.06	2.06
Interpersonal Justice (T2)	-.27**	.08	-3.27	.17*	.08	2.14
Informational Justice (T2)	-.11	.10	-1.18	.13	.09	1.47
Organizational Identification (T1)	-.19**	.07	-2.83	.07	.06	1.04
Info Justice × Org Ident *	-.08*	.04	-2.19	.01	.03	.24
R ²	.46***			.40***		

^aInformational Justice × Organizational Identification interaction.; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$ (N = 174).

Table A2. Study 3 – parallel mediators model: organizational cynicism and organizational trust (outcome model)

Variable	Exit Intentions (T4)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i> -value
Constant	4.59***	1.26	3.64
Gender (T0)	.03	.23	.11
Tenure (T0)	-.19	.10	-1.94
Age (T0)	-.02	.01	-1.84
Negative Affect (T0)	.15	.14	1.11
Procedural Justice (T2)	-.04	.16	-.22
Distributive Justice (T2)	-.03	.09	-.35
Interpersonal Justice (T2)	-.04	.11	-.33
Informational Justice (T2)	-.15	.13	-1.15
Organizational Cynicism (T3)	.41***	.11	3.63
Organizational Trust (T3)	-.15	.12	-1.18
R^2	.37***		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ ($N = 174$).

Table A3. Study 3 – Index of moderated mediation

Mediator	Moderator				
	Organizational identification	Effect	SE(Boot)	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Organizational Cynicism	- 1 SD	.0015	.0497	-.0986	.1011
Organizational Cynicism	+1 SD	-.0948 ^a	.0485	-.2191	-.0226
Organizational Trust	- 1 SD	-.0178	.0259	-.1071	.0107
Organizational Trust	+1 SD	-.0213	.0274	-.1104	.0104

Index of moderated mediation (5,000 resamples)

Mediator	Index	SE(Boot)	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Organizational Cynicism	-.0327 ^a	.0198	-.0801	-.0026
Organizational Trust	-.0012	.0068	-.0218	.0089

^aStatistically significant because the bootstrap intervals do not include zero.