

The Effect of Perceived Pay Equity on Counterproductive Work Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Organizational Cynicism

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ABSTRACT

The influence of pay equity perception has been ignored largely in the human resource literature so far. The aim of this study was to fill this gap by investigating the effect of perceived pay equity on counterproductive work behaviors and whether organizational cynicism had mediating role on this effect. Data were gathered via e-mail survey from 252 white-collar employees working at various private companies in Istanbul. In data analysis, besides the frequency distributions of demographic variables, correlation and regression analyzes were also used. The results of the study demonstrated that organizational cynicism did not play a mediating role, since pay equity did not affect counterproductive work behaviors. However, it has been observed that perceived pay equity affected organizational cynicism negatively and organizational cynicism also affected counterproductive work behaviors positively. In addition to these, it was determined that pay equity, CWBs and organizational cynicism showed a significant difference according to some demographic characteristics. Various theoretical and practical implications were presented in the discussion and conclusions section of the research.

Keywords: Perceptions of pay equity, cynicism, organizational cynicism, counterproductive work behaviors, deviant behavior.

JEL Classification Codes: M10, M12

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INTRODUCTION

Employees are regarded as the main resource of the organizations and attracting, retaining and rewarding talented employees is essential for organizational success (Osibanjo, et al., 2014: 66). A critical issue for both employees and employers, pay is at the core of employment relationship (Gerhart, Minkoff & Olsen, 1995: 2). Pay, which is one of the most crucial impacts on the quality and productiveness of human capital, influences the quality of applicants, the quality of hired employees, the probability of job acceptance, and the motivation and performance level of the employees (Gupta & Shaw, 2014: 1).

The meaning and importance of pay differ from one interested party to another. It is also a measure of equity for some people (Acar, 2007: 16). Equity theory attempts to explain employees' perceptions of equity (Sweeney, 1990: 329).

According to this theory, employees compare the ratio of the outcomes they obtain and the inputs they provide with others' outcome/ input ratio (Miles, Hatfield & Huseman, 1994: 585). If these ratios are not equal, it is understood that inequity exists (Adams, 1965: 280). Perceived inequity leads to dissatisfaction which is revealed either in the form of anger (underreward) or guiltiness (overreward). In this case, a tension arises proportionally to the quantity of inequity (Miner, 2005: 137).

Organizational justice is a topic that draws attention, since it is a determinant of employees' attitudes and behaviors (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011: 1183). Attitudes are an evaluation of a person or object and cause an individual to behave in a certain way toward them (Pickens, 2005: 44). Work-related attitudes play a vital role in the transformation of aggressive feelings into aggressive behaviors (Othman & Suleiman, 2013: 195).

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Organizational cynicism, which expresses the negative attitude of the person towards the organization in which he or she works and is expected to emerge from negative experiences at work (Pfrombeck et al., 2020: 580) can influence an entire organization by reducing productivity or even preventing the organization from achieving its goals (Dobbs & Do, 2019: 4). Because there is a link between organizational trust and cynicism, it can be expected that the perception of organizational justice, which increases the organizational commitment and trust of employees, reduces cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013: 184). Cynical employees may engage in stealing, decreasing their effort and other counterproductive work behaviors because of their frustration and negative emotions (Naseer, et al., 2021: 93-94).

Irrespective of how negative behaviors are defined, whether or not they are classified as bullying, aggression or workplace incivility, such behaviors have a negative impact on organizational effectiveness and individual well-being besides long-term psychological harm (Burnes & Pope, 2007: 290). That is, negative organizational behaviors exhibited intentionally carries the potential for a diversity of negative outcomes for not simply individuals but also organizations (Dimotakis, Ilies & Mount, 2008: 249).

Employees who perceive equal treatment from the organization and its authorities are likely to feel an obligation to respond to it well (Pan et al., 2018: 2). In contrast, they may react most negatively to unequal and unethical outcomes provided by the organization (Kickul, 2001: 293). Social exchange theory suggests that individuals who perceive that get treated unfavorably reciprocate with negative attitudes and behaviors (Li & Chen, 2018: 3). In order to prevent negative consequences in organizations, determinants of them should be detected. In this context, it was thought that it might be important and interesting to understand the impact of pay equity on counterproductive work behaviors and the mediating role of organizational cynicism on this effect, and the study centered upon these issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pay Equity

Perception of equity which is important to all human resource decisions and processes is particularly critical to compensation decisions (Jawahar & Stone, 2011: 297). Perception of pay equity rests upon objective measures and subjective considerations (Kao et al., 2017: 812).

Once the pay has equaled the value of the work done, equity is achieved. On the other hand, inequity occurs when the value of the work done has not matched the value of the pay obtained (Romanoff, Boehm & Benson, 1986: 18).

Not only do employees compare their own pay with the work they do, but also compare it with the pay of colleagues doing similar work. Moreover, they compare it with the pay of employees doing similar work in other organizations. In this regard, pay should be equal as well as being sufficient (Bingöl, 2016: 422).

Perceived equity in compensation is an extremely critical concept that matters to employees. A compensation program which is perceived to be equal is likely to result in fewer complaints and problems related to pay (Caruth & Handlogten, 2001: 6). However, employees who perceive inequity could use negative strategies in an attempt to restore equity. They may exhibit some negative behaviors like arriving late at work, leaving work early, absenteeism, lowering productivity, reducing the quality of their job or even resignation (Banks, Patel & Moola, 2012: 1; Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012: 158).

Pay equity comprises of four dimensions, namely:

- Internal equity refers to the comparison among colleagues' effort-income ratio (Zheng, Wang & Song, 2014: 1222).
- External equity refers to the perceived equity of an employee's pay compared with other employees' pay in other organizations (Livingstone, Roberts & Chonko, 1995: 35).
- Individual equity refers to the pay equity based upon the performance of employees who are doing same type of work in the same organization. Hence, performance contributions are important in pay differences (Terpstra & Honoree, 2003: 68).
- Procedural equity refers to the perceived equity of the processes and procedures used in making decisions about pay (Mathis & Jackson, 2008: 365).

Previous studies have revealed that perceived pay equity is positively related to job satisfaction (Livingstone, Roberts & Chonko, 1995: 33), pay satisfaction (Motshegwa, 2011: 1), intrinsic motivation (Hartmann & Slapnicar, 2012: 4283) and organizational commitment (Buttner & Lowe, 2017: 80-81; ElDin & Rahman, 2013: 889). In the light of these studies, it is clear that creating perception of pay equity in organizations is a necessity.

Organizational Cynicism

Cynicism is a term which was used by ancient Greeks to define some negative beliefs such as apathy, lack of hope, lack of trust in others, pessimism and suspicion (Mousa, 2017: 48; Grama & Todericiu, 2016: 49). The existence of cynicism, which can be seen in all areas of social life, in business life is called organizational cynicism (Torun & Çetin, 2015: 138).

Organizational cynicism is an employee's negative attitude towards the organization that he or she works for and it consists of three dimensions, namely (Dean, Brandes & Dharwadkar, 1998: 345-346):

- Cognitive cynicism refers to employees' belief that the organization lacks integrity, equity, honesty and sincerity.
- Affective cynicism refers to employees' several emotional reactions such as anger, distress, disgust and shame towards their organizations.
- Behavioral cynicism refers to employees' negative and humiliating behaviors. These behaviors could be seen as criticism of the organization, sarcastic humor and pessimistic predictions about organization's future actions.

Organizational cynicism, an important response that may have deep implications for both employee and the organization, is a form of self-defense to be able to overcome unpleasant thoughts and feelings of disappointment about actions taken by the organization and its management (Naus, Iterson & Roe, 2007: 689). According to the research conducted by Mirvis and Kanter (1989), 43 percent of American employees could be classified as cynical and these cynics do not trust in management and their coworkers. They do not find their own pay to be equal or think they have a equal chance at advancement. Cynics also believe that management does not care about them or values they create on their jobs.

On the basis of the above, it could be argued that perceived equity is an important determinant of organizational cynicism. Equity perceptions are expected to reduce employees' cynicism toward the organization because they enhance employees' commitment to and trust in the organization (Chiaburu et al., 2013: 184). Several studies have shown a negative relationship between organizational justice and organizational cynicism (Kristina & Mangundjaya, 2017: 1; Bernerth et al., 2016: 303; Shaharruddin, Ahmad & Musa, 2016: 49;

Öztürk, Eryeşil & Bedük, 2016: 548; Akar & Çelik, 2019: 189). In this respect, the first hypothesis of this research, the focus of which is on pay, is as follows:

H₁: Perceived pay equity has an effect on organizational cynicism.

Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBs)

Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) can be described as intentional actions by members of organizations to do threatens the well-being of organizations, their members, or both (Vardi & Wiener, 1996: 151; Robinson & Bennett, 1995: 556). These actions stemmed from negative emotions violate established organizational norms (Robbins & Judge, 2013:119). Sackett (2002) has claimed counterproductive work behaviors are contrary to organizations legitimate interests.

Counterproductive behaviors can take many forms such as theft, fraud, absenteeism, physical and verbal aggression, or substance use (Marcus & Schuler, 2004: 647). Some of these are pervasive and costly problems faced by organizations (Vardi, 2001: 325). Although CWBs have been conceptualized in a variety of forms, they have a common theme in that they harm to the organization by affecting its functioning or property, or by reducing employees' effectiveness (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001: 292).

CWB is a multidisciplinary topic occupied by researchers from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, economy, and others (Marcus & Schuler, 2004: 649). By reason of the increasing prevalence of these kinds of behaviors and the enormous costs associated with them, many studies documented financial, social and psychological effects of negative organizational behaviors have been carried out (Peterson, 2002: 47).

Spector et al. (2006) have identified five dimensions of CWBs: abuse toward others, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal. Abuse toward others is the most frequent form of CWBs (Keashly, 1998: 86). This dimension consists of harmful behaviors toward others such as making threats and nasty comments, ignoring them, or undermining their ability to work effectively (Chand & Chand, 2014: 43). Behaviors classified as production deviance violate the norms delineating the quality and quantity of work (Vardi & Weitz, 2003: 19). While production deviance refers to purposeful failure to complete tasks correctly, sabotage refers to destroying physical property that belongs to the employer (Bauer, 2011: 3). Any intended behavior exhibited by an

employee to inflict a production or profit loss for the organization could be termed as sabotage (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1987: 367). Employee theft is classified as criminal and it is one of the costliest forms of CWBs (Tucker, 1989: 319; Weitz, Vardi & Setter, 2012: 263). Lastly, withdrawal concerns behaviors that limit the working time to less than is determined by the organization. Absence, arriving late or leaving early, and taking longer breaks than authorized are various forms of withdrawal (Spector et al., 2006: 450).

The literature review shows that CWB is positively associated with workplace incivility (Bibi & Karim, 2013: 330), psychological capital (Baloch, Latif & Azam, 2016: 139), interpersonal conflict (Penney & Spector, 2005: 777), perceived organizational politics (Meisler, Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2019: 1215), and psychological contract breach (Li & Chen, 2018: 5). On the other hand, it is seen that CWB is negatively related to organizational commitment (Ramshida & Manikandan, 2013: 59), positive affectivity (Ugwu & Asogwa, 2018: 6), perceived organizational support (Joy & V G, 2016: 61), and organizational citizenship behavior (Bukhari & Ali, 2009: 88).

As negative perception can usually result in a negative behavior (Danaeefard & Boustani, 2016: 16), it has been suggested that perceptions of employees are one of the predictors of CWBs. For example, if employees perceive the employer to be unequal, they may be more likely to exhibit CWBs in the organization (Gruys, 1999: 18). According to this view, the person who perceives unequal treatment feels anger, outrage, and resentment. As a result of these feelings, desiring for retribution could occur and the harmed party experiences a need to punish those who treat unequally (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997: 434).

Studies on the subject have reached conclusions indicating that there is a negative relationship between organizational justice and CWBs (Hany, Hassan & Badran, 2020: 255; Dora & Azim, 2019: 41; Weldali & Lubis, 2016: 246-247; Roy, Bastounis & Poussard, 2012: 1348; Oluwole, Aderibigbe & Mjoli, 2020: 217). Based on these arguments, the second hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H₂: Perceived pay equity has an effect on counterproductive work behaviors.

Because attitudes consist of beliefs, expectancies, and behavioral intentions, organizational cynicism known as a negative attitude held by an employee regarding his or her organization is expected to cause alienation and produce negative behaviors such as criticism of the

organization (Wilkerson, Evans & Davis, 2008: 2276; Yıldız & Şaylıkay, 2014: 622). Evans et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and employee deviance. Similarly, Tong et al. (2020) revealed that organizational cynicism is a predictor of CWBs. The results of the research conducted by Dar et al. (2020) also indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between organizational cynicism and deviant workplace behaviors. Based on these arguments, the third hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H₃: Organizational cynicism has an effect on counterproductive work behaviors.

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the mediating role of organizational cynicism in the effect of perceived pay equity on CWBs. Hence the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₄: Organizational cynicism mediates the effect of perceived pay equity on counterproductive work behaviors.

METHOD

Purpose and Model of the Study

The purpose of this study was to test a model linking pay equity with organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behaviors.

The following is the research model of this study formed depend on the Blau's social exchange theory dealing with the relationship between perception, attitude and behavior:

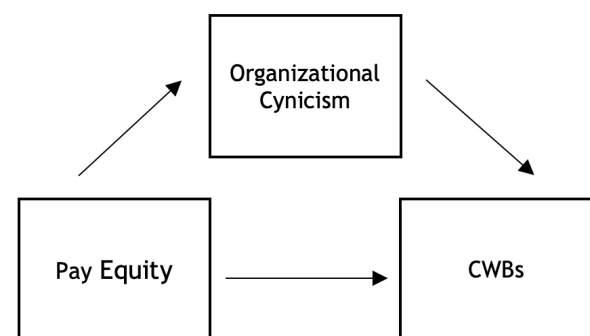


Figure 1: Hypothesized Model

Sampling of the Study

The data was collected from 252 white-collar employees who work at various private companies in Istanbul, Turkey. Respondents participated in the study via an online survey tool and responses were anonymous. The

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Female	116	46
	Male	136	54
Age	<25	23	9,1
	25-34	128	50,8
	35-44	65	25,8
	>45	36	14,3
Marital Status	Single	105	41,7
	Married	147	58,3
Level of Last Education	High school and below	29	11,5
	Associate degree	23	9,1
	Bachelor's degree	143	56,7
	Master's degree	49	19,4
	Doctoral degree	8	3,2
Working Experience	<1 year	12	4,8
	1-5 years	68	27
	6-10 years	81	32,1
	>10 years	91	36,1
Total Monthly Income	2000-3000 TL	55	21,8
	3001-4000 TL	43	17,1
	4001-5000 TL	39	15,5
	5001-6000 TL	28	11,1
	>6000 TL	87	34,5
Total		252	100

response rate was 49,4 percent. Surveys were answered from December 26, 2019 to February 10, 2020 and all of 252 completed surveys were included in the analysis.

The main factor affecting the decision to focus the research on the private sector was that wages are determined by law in the public sector and therefore it is pointless to make comparisons with other organizations in the industry. In accordance with, employees who work in a wide range of occupations, organizations and departments in private sector were requested to fill-up the survey. Thus, for sampling a certain occupation, organization or department was avoided, rather all were represented.

Respondents' gender, age categories, marital status, level of last education, working experience and total monthly income are presented in the Table 1.

As indicated in the Table 1, 54% of employees are male, while 46% are female. Most of the employees (50,8%)

are at the age of 25-34. 58,3% of employees are married, whereas 41,7% are single. When looked at level of last education, it is seen that most of the employees have a bachelor's degree. According to the table, 36,1% of employees have been working for more than 10 years. Employees who have more than 6000 TL monthly income are in the majority compared to employees in other income groups.

Data Collection Tools

Pay equity. The pay equity scale that used in current research has been developed by Livingstone et al. (1995), Zheng et al. (2014), and Terpstra and Honoree (2003). Adaptation to Turkish language was conducted by Demir and Uyargil and reliability level of the scale was found to be .930 for internal equity, .910 for individual-procedural equity, and .819 for external equity (2014). This scale has 4 dimensions with 22 items. Internal equity is measured by 9 items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). External equity is measured by 6 items (10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15). Individual

Table 2. Internal Consistency of the Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Pay Equity	16	,890
Organizational Cynicism	12	,921
Counterproductive Work Behaviors	16	,838

equity is measured by 2 items (17 and 18). Procedural equity is measured by 4 items (19, 20, 21 and 22).

The items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Sample items of this scale were "I think the salary given to me is equal compared to salaries given to my colleagues" (internal equity), "I think my salary is equal compared to salaries paid in other organizations" (external equity), "When i consider my qualifications, i am satisfied with my pay" (individual equity), and "I think the procedures applied in determining my pay are equal" (procedural equity). 2., 6., 9., 10., 12., 15. and 16. items in this scale were reverse coded before analyses.

Organizational cynicism. The organizational cynicism scale that used in current research has been developed by Brandes et al. (1999). Adaptation to Turkish language was conducted by Nitelik Ödemiş and reliability level of the scale was found to be .931 (2011). This scale has 3 dimensions with 13 items. Cognitive cynicism is measured by 5 items (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). Affective cynicism is measured by 4 items (6, 7, 8 and 9). Behavioral cynicism is measured by 4 items (10, 11, 12 and 13).

The items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Sample items of this scale were "I believe that what is said and what is done are different at my company" (cognitive cynicism), "When i think of my company, i get angry" (affective cynicism), and "I criticize practices and policies at my company with others" (behavioral cynicism). There are not any reverse items in the scale.

Counterproductive work behaviors. The CWBs scale that used in current research has been developed by Spector et al. (2006). Adaptation to Turkish language was conducted by Kalağan and reliability level of the scale was found to be .918 (2009). This scale has 5 dimensions with 33 items. Abuse is measured by 18 items (2, 9, 10, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33). Production deviance is measured by 3 items (3, 11 and 13). Sabotage is measured by 3 items (1, 6 and 7). Theft is measured by 5 items (8, 17, 18, 19 and 23). Withdrawal is measured by 4 items (4, 5, 12 and 14).

The items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Sample items of this scale were "I verbally abused someone at work" (abuse), "I purposely failed to follow instructions" (production deviance), "I purposely damaged a piece of equipment or property" (sabotage), "I took money from my employer without permission" (theft), "I came to work late without permission" (withdrawal). There are not any reverse items in the scale.

Data Analysis

So as to determine whether the data display normal distribution or not, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test has been applied separately to the data gathered by the three scales. As a result of the test, it has been seen that only Counterproductive Work Behaviors Scale didn't have a normal distribution (ppf: 0.388 > 0.05, poc: 0.752 > 0.05, pcwb: 0.00 < 0.05). Therefore, analyses of the study have been conducted by using both parametric and non-parametric tests.

In the data analysis process, Pearson correlation analysis, simple regression analysis, T-tests and one-way analysis of variance have been used for pay equity and organizational cynicism. Spearman correlation analysis, simple regression analysis, Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskal-Wallis H analysis have been used for CWBs as well. The data obtained from the survey has been analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 21.0 program. Significance at a level of 0.05 has been sought in all statistical processes.

RESULTS

In order to find out the factor structure of all scales, as an initial starting point, exploratory factor analysis with principal component by varimax rotation has been conducted. According to the analysis results, pay equity scale has showed a 16-item and 3-factor structure as internal equity, external equity, and individual-procedural equity (KMO: .898, sig.: .000, total variance explained: %59.301). That is, individual equity dimension has been combined with procedural equity dimension. 6 items (4, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 16) have been extracted from the scale.

Table 3. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	Pay Equity	Internal Equity	External Equity	Individual- Procedural Equity	Organizational Cynicism	Cognitive Affective Cynicism	Behavioral Cynicism	CWBs	Abuse	Theft	Withdrawal	Mean	SD
1	-	,885**	,519**	,872**	-,486**	-,508**	-,444**	-,209**	-0,12	-0,044	-0,093	-0,086	2,77 0,67
2		-	,261**	,623**	-,349**	-,342**	-,389**	-,89	-0,066	-0,074	-0,119	-,19	3,03 0,82
3			-	,312**	-,301**	-,348**	-,227**	-,144*	-0,084	-0,018	0,012	-0,084	2,75 0,84
4				-	-,492**	-,524**	-,394**	-,273**	-,149*	-0,002	-0,068	-0,119	2,47 0,83
5					-	,876**	,851**	,773**	,365**	,152*	,142*	,301**	2,75 0,81
6						-	,587**	,537**	,311**	0,11	0,103	,281**	3,07 0,91
7							-	,520**	,199**	,138*	,159*	0,121	2,25 1,02
8								-	,396**	,142*	0,088	,392**	2,88 0,99
9									-	,831**	,620**	,766**	1,19 0,27
10										-	,481**	,328**	1,1 0,27
11											-	,257**	1,08 0,31
12												-	1,47 0,57

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Organizational cynicism scale has showed a 12-item and 3-factor structure as cognitive cynicism, affective cynicism, and behavioral cynicism (KMO: .904, sig: .000, total variance explained: %77.267). Only eleventh item has been extracted from the scale. Dimensions are the same as original scale's ones.

CWBs scale has showed a 16-item and 3-factor structure as abuse, theft, and withdrawal (KMO: .842, sig.: .000, total variance explained: %61.473). That is, unlike the original scale, two dimensions named sabotage and production deviance have not occurred. 3 items (1, 6 and 7) regarding sabotage and 3 items (3, 11 and 12) regarding production deviance have been extracted from the scale. In addition, 9 items (2, 9, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 31 and 33) regarding abuse and 2 items (8 and 23) regarding theft have been extracted from the scale.

According to these values, the sample of the study is suitable for the hypothesis tests. After factor analyses, reliability of all scales has also been calculated.

As can be seen in Table 2, so as to examine the reliability of the measurement tools, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values were calculated for the scales of "pay equity", "organizational cynicism" and "counterproductive work behaviors" and were found to be .890, .921, and .838 respectively. All Alpha values are greater than .80, showing very good internal consistency (Ursachi, Horodnic & Zait, 2015: 681).

The means, standard deviations, Pearson correlation between pay equity and organizational cynicism (along with their dimensions) and Spearman correlation between CWBs and both pay equity and organizational cynicism (along with their all dimensions) are reported in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, Employees' pay equity perception is slightly below the midpoint of the five-point scale ($M=2.77$). Their organizational cynicism is almost the same as pay equity perception ($M=2.75$). The frequency of their CWBs is highly low ($M=1.19$).

According to the correlation coefficients given in Table 3, pay equity and its subdimensions have a significant negative relationship with organizational cynicism. However, no relation has been found between pay equity and CWBs. When the relationship between subdimensions of pay equity and CWBs are examined, a low-level negative correlation is observed between only individual-procedural equity and CWBs. The results also show that organizational cynicism

and its subdimensions have a significant positive relationship with CWBs.

Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis Examining the Effect of Pay Equity on Organizational Cynicism

	R	R ²	B	P
Pay Equity	.486	.237	-.591	.000

a. Predictor: (Constant), Pay Equity

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Cynicism

Table 4 reports the findings of regression analysis of pay equity and organizational cynicism which indicates the value of R, R-square, B, and the P-value. The value of R² .237 shows that perceived pay equity accounts for 23.7% of the variance of organizational cynicism. With regard to the value of B, a one unit increase in pay equity results in a decrease by .591 in organizational cynicism. P value is <0.05 which shows that perceived pay equity has significant effect on organizational cynicism, hence H1 was accepted.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis Examining the Effect of Pay Equity on Counterproductive Work Behaviors

	R	R ²	B	P
Pay Equity	.090	.008	-.036	.154

a. Predictor: (Constant), Pay Equity

b. Dependent Variable: Counterproductive Work Behaviors

Table 5 reports the findings of regression analysis of pay equity and CWBs which indicates the value of R, R-square, B, and the P-value. The value of R² is .154 which shows that perceived pay equity accounts for only 0.8% of the variance of counterproductive work behaviors. P value is .154 which means that perceived pay equity does not have significant effect on counterproductive work behaviors, hence H2 was rejected.

Table 6 reports the findings of regression analysis of organizational cynicism and CWBs which indicates the value of R, R-square, B, and the P-value. The value of R² .075 shows that organizational cynicism accounts for 7.5% of the variance of counterproductive work behaviors. With regard to the value of B, a one unit increase in organizational cynicism results in an increase by .092 in counterproductive work behaviors. P value is <0.05 which shows that organizational cynicism has significant effect on counterproductive work behaviors, hence H3 was accepted.

Table 6. Results of Regression Analysis Examining the Effect of Organizational Cynicism on Counterproductive Work Behaviors

	R	R ²	B	P
Organizational Cynicism	.274	.075	.092	.000

a. Predictor: (Constant), Organizational Cynicism
b. Dependent Variable: Counterproductive Work Behaviors

All the hypotheses of the research were developed using the Baron and Kenny’s method for mediation. Accordingly, three conditions must be fulfilled to establish mediation: firstly, the independent variable must affect the mediator variable; secondly, the independent variable must affect the dependent variable; and thirdly, the mediator variable must affect the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986: 1177). Hypothesis 4 proposes that organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between pay equity and CWBs. However, second condition of mediation (i.e., pay equity predicts CWBs) was not met. Therefore, mediated regression analysis could not be used and Hypothesis 4 was rejected. The results of study hypotheses are presented in Table 7.

The Independent Samples T-Test was used to reveal differences between both gender and marital status, if there are any, in terms of their perceptions of pay equity and level of organizational cynicism. The Mann-Whitney U Test was used for frequency of counterproductive work behaviors as well. The result of the tests revealed that females had significantly higher levels of organizational cynicism compared to males ($p:0.009 < 0.05$ and $t:2,619$) when equal variances assumed. Average level of organizational cynicism for females was 2.89 (SD=0.83) whereas it was 2.62 (SD=0.78) for males. Besides, single employees had significantly higher levels of organizational cynicism compared to married employees ($p:0.001 < 0.05$ and $t:3,439$) when equal variances assumed. Average level of organizational cynicism for single employees was 2.95 (SD=0.84) whereas it was 2.60 (SD=0.76) for married employees.

According to the results, there are not significant differences between males and females, and also single and married employees in terms of pay equity and CWBs.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there are any differences between age, level of last education, working experience and total monthly income in terms of their perceptions of pay equity and level of organizational cynicism. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was used for frequency of counterproductive work behaviors as well.

Table 7. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Result
H ₁ : Perceived pay equity has an effect on organizational cynicism.	Supported
H ₂ : Perceived pay equity has an effect on counterproductive work behaviors.	Not Supported
H ₃ : Organizational cynicism has an effect on counterproductive work behaviors.	Supported
H ₄ : Organizational cynicism mediates the effect of perceived pay equity on counterproductive work behaviors.	Not Supported

Post-hoc analysis (LSD & Scheffe) revealed that employees aged 25-34 had significantly higher pay equity perceptions compared to those aged 35-44 and under 25 years of age ($p:0.046 < 0.05$; $2.8828 > 2.6740$ and $2.8828 > 2.5788$). The results also showed that employees who earn more than 6000 TL per month had significantly high pay equity perceptions in comparison with those who earn 2000-3000 TL, 3001-4000 TL and 4001-5000 TL ($p:0.000 < 0.05$; $3.0359 > 2.5364$, $3.0359 > 2.6294$, $3.0359 > 2.5849$).

Organizational cynicism in the 25 years and under group was significantly higher than all other groups ($p:0.010 < 0.05$; $3.2500 > 2.7376$, $3.2500 > 2.7013$, $3.2500 > 2.5463$). Furthermore, employees who earn 2000-3000 TL and 4001-5000 TL had significantly higher organizational cynicism level than that of employees who earn more than 6000 TL ($p:0.022 < 0.05$; $2.9197 > 2.5594$, $2.9551 > 2.5594$).

No differences have been found in pay equity and organizational cynicism according to level of last education and working experience.

Based on the Kruskal-Wallis H test, the median of the groups does not match, so there is a statistically significant difference depend on level of last education ($X^2: 15,081$, $df: 3$, $p:0.002$). According to the Dunn’s test, employees who have bachelor’s degree exhibit more counterproductive work behaviors than those who have associate degree and high school and below ($135,40 > 88,83$; $135,40 > 95,17$).

No differences have been found in CWBs according to age, working experience and total monthly income.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of organizational cynicism on the relationship between pay equity and CWBs. In addition to this, the differences of pay equity, organizational cynicism and CWBs according to demographic variables were examined.

The results indicate that there is no significant effect of pay equity on counterproductive work behaviors. Nevertheless, as expected, pay equity has a negative effect on organizational cynicism while organizational cynicism positively affects counterproductive work behaviors. These results mean that even though the negative perceptions of employees about pay do not cause negative behaviors directly, negative perceptions affect attitudes (organizational cynicism) and also negative attitudes affect behaviors negatively (counterproductive work behaviors).

In comparison with previous research, it has been found similar results. For example, in a research by Kanbur & Canbek (2018), the effect of organizational justice on organizational cynicism was examined in 530 police officers. The results of the study showed that there was a negative correlation between these variables. In another research by Ülbeği & İplik (2018), the relationship between perceived injustice and cynicism was examined in 244 white-collar employees. As a result of the research, a positive correlation was found between these variables. A study conducted among 286 teachers by Girgin & Gümüşeli (2018) also showed a negative correlation between organizational justice and organizational cynicism. All these results clearly show that the perception of justice is an important determinant of cynicism.

On the basis of all these research findings, it is recommended that managers should create pay equity perception, which in turn can affect employee attitudes. If they want to decrease organizational cynicism, it would be better to increase pay equity. Based on the research findings, it can be said that it is important to implement performance-related pay systems, to be transparent in the processes of making pay decisions, to take into account the payments in other organizations while determining the pay, and not to determine a pay that is far below the average. An employee whose salary increases when performing well will see that he or she is not equated with her/ his colleagues with poor performance and will want to maintain this high performance.

The findings also reveal that the perception of pay equity differs according to the age and total monthly income. Consistent with the results of this research, Güneş (2022) revealed that pay equity differed according to age and middle-aged employees had higher pay equity perception than younger and older employees. According to the same research, as the pay increases, pay equity perception also increases. So, perception of pay equity differs according to total monthly income.

It can be thought that employees who receive satisfactory pay will not take account of the issue of pay equity as much as low-paid employees. Therefore, the higher pay equity perception of highly paid employees supports the expected result. It is also an expected result that the perception of pay equity is lower among young employees who are newly recruited and have lower pay and other rights than other employees.

On the other hand, organizational cynicism of the employees should be reduced in order to reduce CWBs. Consistent with this study, there are many studies in the literature revealing that organizational cynicism leads to CWBs (Parisa, Jalil & Mansour, 2016: 196; Otori, Mutiu & Calvin, 2020: 1; Kurnaz & Kökalan, 2020: 55; Nemr & Liu, 2021: 34; Butt & Yazdani, 2021: 390).

The obtained results revealed that CWBs were differentiated according to level of last education. It was seen that employees who have bachelor's degree exhibit higher CWBs than others who have high school and below and associate degree. It was also found in another study conducted by Özüren (2017) that employees who have a bachelor's degree have a higher tendency to exhibit counterproductive work behaviors. The study conducted by Behrem (2017), which reveals that counterproductive work behaviors decrease as the level of education decreases, and that behaviors increase as the level of education increases, also supports this study.

Given that the expectations from the organization of qualified employees who have received a good education are more diverse, it can be thought that individuals who do not meet these expectations have less fear of being unemployed compared to less qualified employees, and they intend to take revenge on the organization by exhibiting such negative behaviors more than they do.

It has been determined that organizational cynicism is more common in female employees. The studies conducted by Çelebi (2019), Öz (2020), Gözcü (2020), Aksin (2020) and Zaza (2021) support this finding. There are also studies showing that only the cognitive

dimension of organizational cynicism differs according to gender and it is higher in female employees (Bayraktar, 2016: 51; İpek, 2018: 55; Çillik, 2019: 74; Küçükkaya, 2019: 87).

Consistent with this study, there are some other studies in the literature revealing that the level of organizational cynicism is higher in single (Çankaya, 2018: 299; Karadede, 2021: 59; Zaza, 2021: 85; Yanar, 2022: 46), young (Çankaya, 2018: 301; Öztürk, 2021: 74-75; Sevda, 2021: 76-77; Yanar, 2022: 45-46) and low-paid employees (Erer & Şahin, 2020: 2955; Zaza, 2021: 86).

It can be thought that the negative discrimination that organizations make to female employees in situations such as recruitment, promotion and providing training to them may cause this. The finding that married employees have less organizational cynicism than singles can be explained by the extra opportunities provided to them. Marriage allowance and maternity leave, financial aid for children's education can be given as examples.

The higher level of organizational cynicism among lower-paid employees shows that pay dissatisfaction is reflected in negative thoughts and feelings. The fact that the level of organizational cynicism is higher in younger employees is a result that reflects the expected. It is not surprising that individuals who have just started working life and have less rights than other employees have more negative thoughts towards the organization compared to employees who have been working in the same organization for many years and have higher organizational commitment.

This research has several limitations that can be addressed by future research. A limitation of the research is that the sample consists of employees working in private institutions. Another limitation of the research is that the data were collected from white-collar employees. Due to the survey questions, it was thought the research is appropriate for white-collar employees. Besides, the effects of the dimensions of the variables were not examined.

The research has been conducted on a Turkish sample of employees. Therefore, the findings of the research may not be transferable outside the Turkish national context. It could be tested on cross-cultural samples.

As a general result of the research, this research model examining the mediating role of organizational cynicism in the relationship between pay equity and CWBs has not been supported. It can be said that this research will inspire the others to investigate the relationships between pay

equity and CWBs in varied contexts. Cynicism can be a moderator in this relationship in future studies. Moreover, it could be taken into consideration pay equity's effect on other topics that were not measured in the current study such as organizational silence, turnover intention and organizational citizenship behaviors.

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