

Endangered Resources: The Role of Organizational Justice and Interpersonal Trust as Signals for Workplace Corruption

Ressources en danger: Le rôle de la justice organisationnelle et de la confiance interpersonnelle en tant que signaux de corruption dans les milieux de travail

Recursos en peligro: el papel de la justicia organizacional y la confianza interpersonal como señales de corrupción en el lugar de trabajo

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude examine la corruption au travail sous l'angle des processus psychologiques individuels. La littérature démontre que les comportements de corruption découlent de diverses motivations, tels la manipulation, les représailles et le conformisme. Cette recherche, fondée sur la théorie de la conservation des ressources (CDR, voir Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), propose une nouvelle voie, où la corruption résulte de la motivation des individus à préserver leurs ressources lorsqu'ils les jugent menacées par leur environnement professionnel.

Nous proposons un modèle original qui introduit la notion de « signaux de ressources » (*resource signals* en anglais). Ce concept, qui vient enrichir la théorie CDR, correspond à la perception des individus quant au soutien offert dans leur milieu de travail ou, sinon, au besoin de développer des ressources et de les préserver. Plus précisément, cette étude teste un modèle de médiation modérée dans lequel le sentiment de maîtrise, une ressource personnelle, modère l'impact des signaux de ressources (justice distributive, justice procédurale, confiance interpersonnelle) sur la corruption au travail.

Les résultats proviennent d'un échantillon d'employés du secteur public français ($n = 575$). Ils valident l'hypothèse du rôle médiateur de la confiance entre les différentes facettes de la justice organisationnelle et les mesures de la corruption, notamment le soudoiment et la déviance de propriété. Cependant, l'effet négatif indirect de la justice procédurale sur la corruption au travail est plus marqué. Conformément aux hypothèses formulées, le sentiment de maîtrise modère significativement le lien entre la confiance et les deux types de corruption.

Les apports de cette recherche sont théoriques et pratiques. L'intégration des signaux de ressources dans un modèle CDR montre la nécessité d'évaluer les comportements corrompus selon les motivations à préserver les ressources psychologiques. Corollairement, cette étude suggère aux organisations de dépasser le cadre de l'éthique et des procédures afin d'envisager la corruption comme un éventuel symptôme de la perception de signaux organisationnels menaçants pour les ressources individuelles.

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Endangered Resources: The Role of Organizational Justice and Interpersonal Trust as Signals for Workplace Corruption

Jean-Pierre Neveu and Benjamin Kakavand

The present research explores the role of organizational signals that prompt individual motivation to engage in corrupt behaviour. Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), the study puts forward a moderated mediation model where a sense of mastery, a personal psychological resource, moderates the impact on occupational corruption of resources signals, including distributive justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal trust. Drawing from a sample of public sector employees in France ($n = 575$), results validate the hypothesized mediating role of trust between both facets of organizational justice and measures of corruption, including bribery and property deviance. The indirect negative effect, however, is strongest between procedural justice and workplace corruption. As hypothesized, a sense of mastery significantly moderates the link between trust and both corruption types. Results are discussed along with the implications for COR theory and the management of workplace corruption.

KEYWORDS: workplace behaviour, organizational justice, interpersonal trust, sense of mastery, conservation of resources theory.

Introduction

Most recent management surveys have indicated that corruption in business matters is viewed as a key 'challenge' for companies (Kemp, 2013). For instance, the cost of bribery, a form of corruption, has been estimated to be about \$1 trillion worldwide every year (Nobel, 2013) and a serious challenge to democratic processes (Montero, 2018). Furthermore, in addition to the sheer economic burden, corrupt behaviours within organizations have been revealed to directly impact employee morale, productivity and innovation (Serafeim, 2014).

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Authors have generally acknowledged organizational corruption as a focused category of workplace deviance (Hollinger and Clark, 1982; Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Also classified as a form of counter-productive work behaviour (CWB), corruption embraces practices that include embezzlement, payment of bribes, kickbacks, graft, and cronyism. These are volitional behaviours on the part of an organization member to extract personal advantages detrimental to the legitimate interests of an organization (Bashir *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Gruys and Sackett, 2003; Mangione and Quinn, 1975). Each one of them is an occupational crime, since they are motivated by a personal benefit illegally obtained from the employer, or from the customer (Clinard and Quinney, 1973).

Standards have been proposed to help and guide organizations in responsible and ethical management (Lindgreen, 2004; Transparency International, 2017; White and Montgomery, 1980). That said, there also remains a need for a better understanding of corruption mechanisms. The following research question is thus proposed: “Why, in full awareness of adverse professional and legal consequences, do individuals choose to engage in malevolent corrupt behaviour?”.

Research on corruption is difficult because the phenomenon is multifaceted, secretive and potentially embarrassing. However, there are cognitive studies that frame workplace corruption within theories such as planned behaviour theory (Gorsira *et al.*, 2018; Rabl, 2011), attraction-retention-attrition theory (Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly, 1998), social information processing theory (Lange, 2008; Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly, 1998), attribution theory (Martinko *et al.*, 2002), social learning theory (Chappell and Piquero, 2004) and, more recently, moral disengagement theory (Moore, 2008, 2009, 2015). Contrasting with these individual approaches, there is research that theorizes corruption from a societal perspective that includes economic, legal, moral, and cultural considerations (Akers, 1988; Fan, 2002; Gopinath, 2008; Judge *et al.*, 2011; Luo, 2008).

The objective of the present study is to bridge both research streams and to develop a perspective of corrupt behaviour that draws from both individual and environmental levels of analysis. The expected theoretical contribution is to integrate corruption within a model that incorporates individuals’ internal dynamics and the working environment [internal world versus meso-world; Dimant and Schulte (2016)]. Specifically, we suggest that corruption corresponds to individuals’ motivation to survive the perceived misfit between valued personal goals and the occupational environment. Following the path of recent developments that link self-preservation to counterproductive behaviours (Mitchell *et al.*, 2018), our study analyzes corruption within a theoretical framework proposed by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), a motivational approach to dysfunctional behaviours in organizations. It explores corruption as determined by an interplay between personal motivational resources and

perceived organizational resources signals, including organizational justice and interpersonal trust.

The road(s) to corruption

Corruption relates to serious property mishandling at the organizational level (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Corruption fits the definition of counterproductive work behaviours (CWB, see Bowling and Gruys, 2010; Gruys, 1999; Kwok *et al.*, 2005; Mangione and Quinn, 1975), which have been defined as a willingness “to acquire or (to) damage the tangible property or assets of the work organization without authorization” (Hollinger and Clark, 1982: 333). Corrupt behaviours include kickbacks, bribes, embezzlement, and nepotism (Bashir *et al.*, 2012; Pearce and Huang, 2014).

In line with accepted CWB taxonomies (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Bowling and Guys, 2010; Pinto *et al.*, 2008; Sackett and DeVore, 2001; Spector *et al.*, 2006; Sackett and DeVore, 2001), organizational corruption has been investigated according to the nature of antecedents, e.g. individual and environmental. At an individual level, CWB and corruption have thus been considered an outcome of personality factors (Boes *et al.*, 1997; Salgado, 2002) and negative attitudes (Lefkowitz, 2009). At a macro level, corrupt behaviours have been related to situations associated with a firm’s business and economic environment (Baucus, 1994), job and work-group characteristics (Ashforth and Anand, 2003), organizational climate (Darley, 2005; Stachowicz-Stanusch and Simha, 2013), and organizational control systems (Lange, 2008).

As with other CWB types, corruption involves complex multi-level interplays of personal, social, cultural, and economical factors. Nevertheless, we observe a number of limitations in corruption studies. First, most of them are inscribed within a common stressor-emotional (SE) model (Spector and Fox, 2005). Specifically, corruption is set as an outcome of a cognitive process that integrates interactions between straining situational antecedents and personal emotional reactions (Aghion *et al.*, 2010; Gualandri, 2012). This stimulus-response perspective, however, still leaves open the question of interpersonal variations in appraising the nature of situations, such as the perception difference between men and women with regard to failure of organizational support (Siller, Baden and Hochleitner, 2016). Second, the SE model leaves little room for understanding an individual’s motivation to consciously engage in reprehensible acts. Third, research commonly assumes that corruption is dysfunctional and unethical. Yet, authors have recently challenged what they consider to be too decontextualized and too normative perspective (Pearce, 2015). Advances in evolutionary-based psychology, for example, show that ethically (normatively) sanctioned acts can reveal symptomatic outcomes of adaptive individual strategies (Del Giudice,

2016). In short, individuals feel it is legitimate to engage in corruption when such behaviour does not violate their own ethical norms.

Following from the above, we propose a motivation-based approach for understanding corrupt behaviour. Specifically, we suggest corruption is an outcome of interactions between determinants that correspond to both adverse contextual signals and valued motivational resources.

Model and hypotheses

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) explains human motivation from the perspective of a drive for preservation. Fundamentally, the theory proposes that individual motivation is constrained by the conservation of valued factors, otherwise known as resources, including individual, social, tangible, and symbolic. Consistent with this framework, we propose that the backdrop of organizational corruption corresponds to a conservation strategy. Specifically, corruption corresponds to the fear of losing control of valued motivational resources. For instance, in a context of real, or perceived, job insecurity, we assume that individuals engage in corruption to protect themselves against an anticipated onslaught of potential aggressions such as downsizing and technical unemployment. Corruption is thus considered as a tool for “buying” stability and securing one’s turf.

Valued motivational resources, however, should also be considered within the context of necessary adjustments within the environment. Recent theoretical developments have suggested the relevance of organizational mechanisms that signal opportunities for resource development, or risks for deprivation. Resource signals correspond to individuals’ perceptions that the work environment is supportive and considerate of their need for resource development and preservation (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; Valcour *et al.*, 2011). Signals are not personal resources, as their control lies outside of the person. Signals provide environmental cues, favourable or adverse, upon which individuals adjust their strategies to invest for resource development or preservation. Interpersonal trust (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2015) and organizational justice (Campbell *et al.*, 2013) have thus been tested as resource signals in relation to social support. In the present study, we propose a model (Figure 1) where (dis)trust and feelings of (in)justice are perceived as resource signals that determine an orientation toward corrupt behaviours.

Furthermore, our model enriches the COR-based approach to corruption by exploring the role of motivational resources in relation to resource signals. Specifically, we control for the impact of trust and organizational justice on corruption with a sense of mastery, a prominent personal resource that provides individuals

with a sense of control and responsibility over desired outcomes (Antonovsky, 1987). A sense of mastery is expected to moderate the link between resource signals and corruption.

Organizational justice

Organizational justice refers to an individual's perception of how justly they are treated at work (McCardle, 2007). Empirical findings have highlighted a significant relationship between perceptions of unfair treatment from colleagues and supervisors and unethical behaviours, including corruption and workplace deviance (Ambrose, Seabright and Schminke 2002; Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield, 1999; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Individuals who are not satisfied with the perceived fairness of organizational procedures show greater inclination toward violation of organizational norms and subsequent acts of deviance and corruption (Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield, 1999; Lim, 2002).

Organizational justice, however, is a multidimensional construct that includes dimensions of distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). With regard to the specific issue of corruption, we chose to limit our focus to distributive and procedural justice types. Fundamentally, perception of interactional justice, with which informational justice has been associated (Cropanzano and Molina, 2015), can be understood as an element of procedural justice. Yet, procedural justice refers to explicit policies, practices and procedures, whereas interactional justice relates to more informal and subjective relationships (Simons and Roberson, 2003). Moreover, research has stressed the greater relevance of distributive and procedural justices with corruption (Ambrose, Seabright and Schminke, 2002; Abu Elanain, 2010). We recall that distributive justice refers to the perceived gains, or loss, of organizational resources such as financial rewards, promotions, and training opportunities (Fitz-Gerald, 2002; Nirmala and Akhilesh, 2006). Procedural justice relates to the perception of organizational policies and procedures (Forret and Love, 2008; Greenberg, 1990).

Within a COR-framed analysis, organizational justice corresponds to a perceived state of the organizational environment. An illustration of the internal/meso-world interface model (Dimant and Schulte, 2016), this view signals the extent to which occupational procedures are respected, and allow for the preservation of organizational fairness, a motivational resource. As two specific examples of organizational justice, we propose distributive and procedural justice as resource signals that determine workplace corruption:

HYPOTHESIS 1: Distributive justice correlates negatively with workplace corruption.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Procedural justice correlates negatively with workplace corruption.

Trust

Trust has been defined as “positive expectations regarding another’s conduct” (Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies, 1998: 439). It is an example of a resource signal that facilitates cooperation among team members. It is expected to fuel greater bonding between individuals and, in turn, to create a greater sense of responsibility toward others (Kimmet *et al.*, 1980; Kong, Dirks and Ferrin, 2012). Conversely, a lack of trust can induce perceptions of risk and uncertainty, and trigger behaviours of self-interest (Kelley and Thibault, 1978; Thau *et al.*, 2007). Violation of trust has therefore serious negative implications for the ethical conduct of organizations (Williams, 2006), with direct effects on a collection of counterproductive behaviours, such as fraud and corruption (Thau *et al.*, 2007).

With regard to corruption matters, organizational trust surfaces as a symptom of relationships. Put differently, perceived organizational justice has been identified as a significant predictor of trusting interpersonal attitudes and subsequent organizational performance (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009; Farndale, Hope-Hailey and Kelliher, 2010; Krot and Lewicka, 2012; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003). For instance, organizational justice and good relations between employees were found to facilitate interpersonal trust, with a resulting positive impact on reducing risks and operating costs (Krot and Lewicka, 2012; Saekoo, 2011).

Coherent with our overall COR-based modelling, we consider that the relationship between perceived organizational justice and workplace corruption corresponds to individual perceptions that the working environment ensures, or not, the preservation of interpersonal trust, a valued motivational resource. Consequently, we formulate the following hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 3: As a resource signal, interpersonal trust mediates the negative relationship between organizational justice, including distributive and procedural justice, and workplace corruption.

Sense of mastery

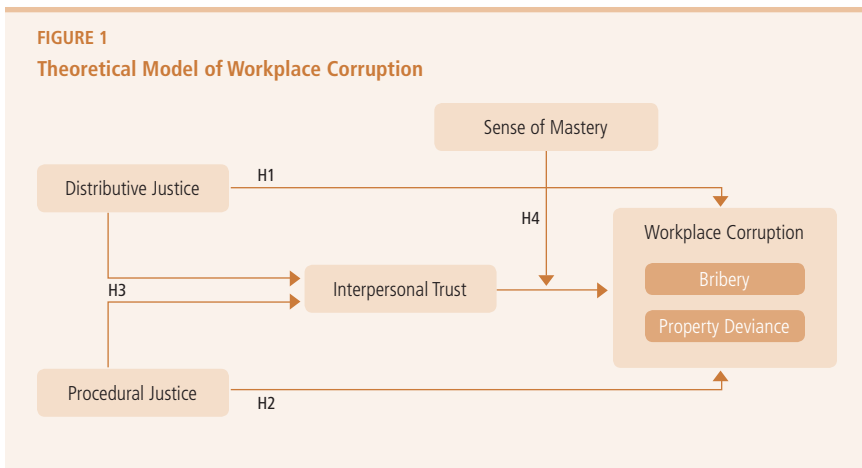
High levels of personal mastery have been found to lead to a broader and deeper sense of responsibility in the workplace (Senge, 2010). Conversely, a depleted sense of mastery fuels organizational deviance (Bennett and Robinson, 2003; Pablo *et al.*, 2007). A lower sense of mastery correlates positively with corrupt acts and unethical behaviours, while lower intentions to cheat correlate with increased mastery perceptions (Sengupta and Mukhopadhyay, 2012; Vohs and Schooler, 2008).

A sense of mastery is fundamentally a socially-dependent motivational resource. It involves a relational risk constrained by the extent to which individuals feel secure about their own social environment (Nooteboom, Berger and

Noorderhaven, 1997). Thus, in a context of adverse perceptions, i.e. negative resource signals, a sense of mastery as a personal resource is expected to mitigate effects of deleterious outcomes. Following COR theorizing, a sense of coherence acts as a resource that is expected to alter the negative impact of adverse resource signals. Specifically, we suggest that a sense of coherence attenuates the de-motivational process that leads to corruption. Consequently, we enrich our mediated model of corruption with the following hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 4: A sense of mastery moderates the relationship between trust and workplace corruption.

FIGURE 1
Theoretical Model of Workplace Corruption



Methodology

Procedure and sample

The focus of this research is corruption in public organizations. The nature of public and private sectors is different. Private organizations pursue a single goal of profit (Farnham and Horton, 1996); public organizations have relatively intangible, vague and multiple goals (Allison, 2012). In public organizations, a large part of corrupt behaviours concerns the delivery of public services and spreads throughout bureaucratic hierarchies. Therefore, we selected our sample from several public sector organizations in randomly different hierarchical positions.

A self-report questionnaire was sent to 2000 public sector employees in France. We know of no study like this in this country while, at the same time, public sector employment stands at one of the highest levels in Europe (88.5/1000 inhabitants; Deschard and Le Guilly, 2017), with a nationwide Perceived Corruption Ranking of 72 out of 100 surveyed countries (World Rank

21/180; Transparency International France, 2018). Individuals were selected in several organizations to complete a questionnaire. Some questionnaires were sent by mail and the rest were handed-out during working hours. Subjects were thoroughly briefed and reassured that the data they provided would be kept confidential. Specifically, completed questionnaires were the sole property of independent researchers, and data, in either aggregated or disaggregated form, were not provided to employers.

The final sample was 575, a return rate of 29%. This response rate stands favourably with regard to the 8 to 37% range for self-report questionnaires on less sensitive topics than workplace corruption, or disseminated through more user-friendly electronic approaches (Schuldt and Totten, 1994; Schaefer and Dillman, 1998). The majority of respondents (55%) were male, with an average seniority of six years in their current organization. Respondents' age ranges from 25 to 68 years, with a mean age of 39.5 ($SD = 10.51$). The final sample covers a range of occupations, including accountants (12%), auditors (12%), managers (27%), administrative officers (40%), and supervisors (10%).

Measures

'Workplace corruption' is difficult to measure for two main reasons (Svensson, 2005). First, due to the ethical onus, corruption is most often a taboo issue that thrives under the garb of secrecy. Second, corruption takes different forms. It is an umbrella-notion that covers a number of deviant workplace behaviours (Spector and Fox, 2005). In the present research, we focus on two types of mischief, including reward deviance, i.e. bribery, and property deviance. These illustrate two levels of corrupt behaviours. The former operates at an interpersonal level of exchange, with the target of corruption clearly identified by the perpetrator. In these circumstances, the target refers to an impersonal organization that overpowers the individual. This dichotomy reflects a double ethical standard, where cheating the system is established as subordinate to acting in a way consistent with one's personal values.

Also dubbed "the essence of corruption" (Andvig *et al.*, 2001: 8) bribery, or reward deviance, is a form of corruption that is most prominent in the literature (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1997; Gorsira *et al.*, 2018; Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2010). It is referred to variously as "kickbacks", "gratuities", "pay off", "sweeteners", "palms greasing", "back scratching", "facilitation payment" (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1997; *UK Bribery Act*, 2010). Overall, bribery corresponds to payments of some kind with the intention of impressing the recipient in a way favourable to the briber. Bribery is corruption because the recipient knows that such a payment is undue and violates accepted rules and norms. It is, therefore, hidden, not advertised. Granted that what is considered bribery also depends on cultural

contexts. A practical distinction between a gift and bribery can be blurry. For example, the line is thin between corruption and meanings of `blat` (also “a favour”, in Russian), and *guanxi* (that also refers to “networking” in Chinese, see Michailova and Worm, 2003; Yang, 1989). That said, the basic rule of thumb is that there is bribery when individuals knowingly engage in socially/legally reprehensible acts.

For this study, we chose Gbadamosi and Joubert’s (2005) instrument to evaluate reward deviance/bribery for it conveniently, i.e. indirectly, solicits answers on sensitive issues. Sample items on a four-item scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” include: “It is common that individuals pay some irregular additional payments (bribes or tips) to get things done”, “It is common for organizations to pay bribes and tips to get things done”, “If a public official acts against rules, help can be obtained elsewhere”, and “Bribery and corruption is common in your organization”.

Property deviance refers to abuses and the waste of organizational resources. It materializes when individuals obtain and benefit unduly from what the organization makes available. Organizational advantage is sought after through illegitimate entitlement. Embezzlement is a form of property deviance. In the present study, we measure property deviance using a six-point (from never to always), three-item scale developed by Peterson (2002), and further tested in relation to organizational justice by Syaebani and Sobri (2011). Scale items include: “Padded an expense account to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses”, “Accepted a gift/favour in exchange for professional treatment”, and “Taken property from work without permission.”

`Organizational justice` measurement offers a choice of instruments (Colquitt, 2001; McFarlin and Sweeney, 1997). In our case, we use the scale developed by Moorman *et al.* (Moorman, 1991; Niehoff and Moorman, 1993), since it has been applied to corruption situations (Allameh and Rostami, 2014). `Distributive justice` corresponds to five items that assess the fairness of different work outcomes, including work schedule, pay level, job responsibilities, and workload. A sample item is, “I think that my level of pay is fair.” `Procedural justice` is evaluated by six items on individuals’ perceptions of fair and unbiased information. As for `distributive justice`, the scale ranges from 1 (“strongly agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”). A sample item is, “To make job decisions, my general manager collects accurate and complete information.”

`Trust` was measured using a unidimensional scale developed by Cook and Wall (1980). It comprises twelve items, of which two are reversed, graded from 1 (“strongly agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”). The scale evaluates individual opinions on the level of trust and confidence that can be placed in workplace

colleagues and management. Specifically, six items assess faith in peers’ and management’s intentions, while six other items assess confidence in peers’ and management’s actions. A sample item is, “Most of my workmates can be relied upon to do as they say they will do.”

‘Sense of mastery’ refers to a perception of control and expertise, a personal psychological resource. To evaluate a sense of mastery, we use the seven-item scale validated by Pearlin and Schooler (1978). Originally developed to study coping behaviours, it assesses the extent to which individuals generally feel personal mastery over important life outcomes. It comprises seven items ranging from 1 (“strongly agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”), five of which are reversed. A sample item is, “I have little or no control over the things that happen to me.”

Results

Preliminary statistics

Means, reliability, and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1. Cronbach’s alphas validate the internal reliability of all measurement scales, from highest (.87 for procedural justice and trust) to lowest (.68 for property deviance). Correlation results reveal that workplace corruption relates negatively to all independent variables. Conversely, inter-correlations between resource variables are all positive, with a particularly strong significant association between trust and sense of mastery ($r = .45, p < 0.01$). A lack of significant relationships between property deviance and procedural justice, and between property deviance and trust can also be noted.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Variable Inter-Correlations / Sample (n = 575)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	39.05	10.51							
1. Distributive Justice	3.49	.88	(.81)						
2. Procedural Justice	3.10	.90	.52**	(.87)					
3. Sense of Mastery	3.77	.67	.39**	.38**	(.76)				
4. Workplace Corruption	1.95	.61	-.27**	-.17**	-.19**	(.70)			
5. Interpersonal Trust	3.50	.66	.54**	.69**	.45**	-.21**	(.87)		
6. Reward Deviance	2.22	1.10	-.31**	-.29**	-.22**	.87**	-.29**	(.72)	
7. Property Deviance	1.32	.59	-.14**	-.042	-.17**	.56**	-.06	.19**	(.68)

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; Reliability coefficients alpha on diagonal

Hypotheses testing

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to test the measurement model. Reliability and validity of study constructs were tested using Analysis of Moment Structures, on AMOS 21 (Arbuckle, 2012). AMOS Structural Estimates for Proposed Structural Equation Model (Maximum Likelihood), Factor Loadings and Relationship Coefficients of Proposed Structural Equation, all show statistically significant relationships for each variable with respect to latent construct (Table 2). The maximum likelihood method was adapted for estimation. The Goodness of Fit Statistics of Proposed Structural Equation Model are as follow; Chi Square/*df* (*df* = 12, Δ^2 = 42.30), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .06), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = .97), Adjust Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = .95), Normed Fit Index (NFI = .97), Root Mean Square Residual (RMR= .04) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI= .97). The relatively high level of the Goodness of Fit Statistics Indices indicates that relationships among variables are statistically significant. Composite reliability values were also calculated that showed good reliability coefficients of between .70 and 0.90 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

TABLE 2
Measurement and Structural Model Fit

Model	<i>df</i>	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR	RMSEA
Measurement Model	260	582.12	.93	.91	.95	.92	.080	.046
Structural Model	178	374.31	.94	.93	.97	.94	.077	.044
Structural Model of Workplace Corruption Scale	12	42.30	.98	.95	.97	.97	.042	.066

Further analyses ran bootstrapping to confirm the mediation effect of trust, a “most powerful and reasonable method of obtaining confidence limits for specific indirect effects under most conditions” (Preacher and Hayes, 2008: 13). Statistical mediation, moderation, and conditional process analyses were all performed following the PROCESS procedure (Hayes, 2013) for testing moderation and mediation effects.

Table 3 presents results for Hypotheses 1 to 4. Three nested models were examined. The first model illustrates the direct effects of organizational justice variables on corruption. The second model corresponds to the mediation analysis. The third model tests the moderated mediation using Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) bootstrapping procedure.

Supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2, both distributive justice and procedural justice negatively predict workplace corruption, as indicated by their respective

standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$, for distributive justice; $\beta = -.28, p < .05$, for procedural justice).

Hypothesis 3, which predicted a trust mediation effect between measures of organizational justice and workplace corruption, is also validated. Specifically, and with regard to distributive justice, there is a significant effect on trust (.16, $p = .001$). Similarly, for procedural justice, results show a significant direct effect on trust (.79, $p = .001$), and a direct effect of trust on workplace corruption (-.07, $p = .01$). Results, however, indicate partial mediations, as both procedural and distributive justice paths to workplace corruption remain significant. Specifically, partial mediation is suggested because distributive and procedural justice impact directly on corruption while they also impact on corruption through interpersonal trust.

Further bootstrapping analysis was conducted in order to confirm the mediation effect of trust. Based on the results in Table 3, it is found that the Standardized Indirect Effects (SIE) value for both procedural justice [(-.22, $p = .001$, with confidence interval CL 95% (-.29, -.15)] and distributive justice [(-.05, $p = .001$, with confidence interval, CL 95% (-.08, -.02)] are between Lower Bounds (LB) and Upper Bounds (UB), with significant p values inferior to .05. This confirms a

TABLE 3
Mediation and Moderated Mediation Results for Workplace Corruption

Predictor	Model 1 (Direct effect) Workplace corruption		Model 2 (Mediation) Trust		Model 3 (Moderated Mediation) Workplace Corruption		
	β	SE	β	SE	Coeff	SE	t
Independent variables							
Distributive Justice	-.30***	.07	.16***	.04			
Procedural Justice	-.28*	.15	.79***	.03			
Trust	-.07**	.03	-	-			
Trust x Sense of Mastery	-	-	-	-	-.11***	.03	-3.48
Model R²							
Trust		.79					
Workplace Corruption (mediation)		.14					
Workplace Corruption (moderated-mediation)		.19					
Bootstrap BC (95%)							
	SIE	SE	LB	UB	P		
Distributive Justice	-.05	.02	-.08	-.02	.001		
Procedural Justice	-.22	.04	-.29	-.15	.001		

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

significant mediating effect of trust between organizational justice (distributive and procedural) and workplace corruption.

Table 3 also presents results for Hypothesis 4. These indicate that the cross-product coefficient between trust and a sense of mastery is significant ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -3.48$, $p < .001$). The moderated mediation hypothesis on work corruption is thus validated. Comparisons between models indicate that a moderated mediation model adds explained variance to the mediation model ($\Delta R^2 = .05$).

To enrich our understanding of workplace corruption mechanisms, we further tested the moderated mediation model with bribery and property deviance as dependent variables. Results thus highlight a greater negative impact of procedural justice than distributive justice on bribery and property deviance (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Moderated Mediation Results for Bribery and Property Deviance

Predictors	Bribery				Property Deviance			
	Index	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Index	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Independent variables								
Distributive Justice	-.07	.02	-.12	-.02	-	-	-	-
Distributive Justice	-	-	-	-	-.04	.01	-.07	-.01
Procedural Justice	-.10	.04	-.18	-.03	-	-	-	-
Procedural Justice	-	-	-	-	-.06	.02	-.11	-.01
Model R²								
Distributive Justice	.08				.07			
Procedural Justice	.06				.05			

Discussion

This study draws from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). As such, it identifies corruption as a strategy to secure valued motivational resources and corrupt behaviour as a response to the perceived threat to one's occupational assets. At this point, corrupt acts are considered legitimate, as the corrupting individual considers himself a victim who fights for professional survival (Gardiner and Olson, 1974). Consequently, we examined an integrated moderated mediation model that tests a negative relationship between selected determinants, including perceived organizational signals related to organizational justice and interpersonal trust, and individual perception of occupational mastery and the emergence of corrupt acts, including bribery and property deviance.

Results provide support for our moderated-mediation model and shed new light on the determining mechanisms of workplace corruption. That is, for in-

dividuals whose interpersonal trust on the job is affected by feelings of unfair treatment, a reaction in the form of corrupt behaviours is all the more likely when it coincides with a sense of loss in controlling the work situation. Specifically, bribery and property deviance are found to be significant responses to combined states of distrust and occupational estrangement that arise mostly from perceptions of procedural injustice. These findings call for attention, as they contribute to the literature at various levels that we now review.

A main contribution is to go beyond the empirical experience of workplace corruption to provide an explanatory framework that enriches the micro level of personal dynamics (Dimant and Schulte, 2016). As such, we have proposed conceptualizing corruption as an interaction process between individual and organizational stakes. Specifically, this study envisions corruption as a way to manage motivational needs for organizational justice and interpersonal trust. Negative perceptions of the organizational environment send adverse signals to individuals who seek protection from potential losses (Vermunt and Steensma, 2016). Consequently, this threat leads to the selection of corrupt behaviours, e.g. bribery and property deviance, as the most appropriate strategy for stalling negative spirals of resource depletion. A contribution of the present study is thus to integrate COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018) and metamotivational research (Scholer and Miele, 2016; Scholer, *et al.*, 2018), whereby workplace corruption relates to self-regulation for achieving the goal of resource preservation.

Within this overarching framework, our results offer conceptual and modelling contributions. First, this research highlights complex interactions between psychological determinants of corruption. We thus found that a perceived depletion of an individual sense of mastery, a motivational resource, can be linked to a perceived lack of a favourable environment materialized by organizational justice and interpersonal trust, two resource signals. For instance, the impact of organizational justice on corruption depends on the type of perceived justice. As compared to distributive justice, procedural justice emerges as a signal of significance that strongly relates to the occurrence of corrupt outcomes. This result is in line with recent investigations on the differential value of psychological resources in relation to outcomes (Morelli and Cunningham, 2012; Pines *et al.*, 2002). Our results suggest corruption as a form of resistance to a perceived unfair change in organizational arrangements. This unfairness is gauged relative to referent determinants among which procedural justice emerges as more valuable than distributive justice.

Second, this research adds support for considering corruption as a trust-determined retaliatory process at the social/interpersonal level (Niehoff and Paul, 2000). Fuelled by a perceived breach of social contract, bribery and property deviance emerge as reactions against organizational rules that are, or are

about to be, broken or used unfairly against one's interests. Consequently, individuals who feel deprived of a fair resource allocation process question others' trustworthiness, while trust relates precisely to procedural transparency and retributive justice (Frazier *et al.*, 2010; Khiavi *et al.*, 2016; Ruder, 2003). Furthermore, our results corroborate the mediating role of trust between feelings of justice and a favourable outcome pertaining to workers' attitudes (Lewicki *et al.*, 2005). Lower trust reduces perceived legitimacy, an instrumental mode of obedience to rules and norms. The recourse to corruption thus finds legitimacy in a de-legitimization of the organizational environment. Bribery and property deviance are adaptive answers for protecting assets when confronting a poorly regarded and distrusted environment.

Finally, an interesting result of our research is about how resources combine between themselves. Our moderated mediation model validates the differential role of trust and a sense of mastery on corruption. In the same vein, increased corruption is found to contribute significantly to a unique combination of weaker perceived procedural justice and lower trust. This suggests that the feeling of being in charge can buffer the deleterious impact of crippled trusting relationships, as individuals hope to be able to compensate for, or to restore, lost resources (Hobfoll, 2001; Stets, 1995). This result can also suggest that procedural justice acts as a "surrogate for trust" in regulating investment quality in social relationships.

Conclusion: limits and perspectives

Our results highlight the role of both distributive justice and procedural justice in the conditioning mechanism of corruption. The question remains, however, as to the role of other facets of organizational justice. Though not specifically applied to corruption, it has been noted that both interpersonal and informational justice relate to negative organizational reactions (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). Fairness of interpersonal communication can thus be expected to impact on the perceived reliability of the psychological contract that frames organizational social exchange (Kingshott and Dincer, 2008). With regard to corruption, future research can explore the conditioning role of interactional justice as an interpersonal resource to be preserved and developed.

As presented above, corruption is not limited to bribes and property deviance. Accordingly, we suggest that resources involved in the corruption process extend beyond those presented in this study. Nepotism and cronyism have thus been related to a need for secure cooperation, an interpersonal resource, between individuals of common kin (Colarelli, 2015). Likewise, it has been suggested that graft can be considered "honest" by the perpetrator when appraised as a legiti-

mate protective answer to the perceived threat on valued tangible assets, including money, electors, or customers (Riordan, 1974). Our study paves the way for more investigations that consider corruption from the perspective of an interaction between selected corrupt outcomes and specific resources.

Concerning its methodology, our study raises the issue of the possible effects of response style and common method variance (CMV). Indeed, a cross-sectional design such as ours on such a sensitive topic as corruption can induce measurement error from respondents' answers. To attenuate this potential bias, we have controlled results in both procedural and statistical ways (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). First, the questionnaire created a psychological separation by differentiating between measurements related to organizational perceptions, i.e. impersonal answering mode for resource signals and dependant corruption variables, and the interpersonal trust variable, i.e. first-person answering mode. Second, a post-hoc statistical Harman's Single Factor Test yielded a 27% variance of first factor unrotated principal component factor analysis, well below the 50% cap defined by the literature (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015).

With regard to psychometrics, it should also be noted that Cronbach's alpha measurement of property deviance of .68 is relatively low. That said, this near .70 coefficient remains acceptable, keeping in mind the difficulty of obtaining high alpha scores on scales with few items (Cortina, 1993; Nunnally, 1978). We suggest future research explores possible scale expansion for increasing measurement robustness.

Finally, future research using a COR framework can apply corruption to the context of cultures and values. First, possible contrasting results could be tested on samples from private sector organizations. Differences in the work context may indeed affect individual strategies and interpersonal relationships. Second, organizational corruption is a global issue that challenges national and personal norms of conduct (Bierstaker, 2009; Hooker, 2009). Based on an indiscriminate sample, our findings beg for replication while controlling for the cultural environment. We suggest closer attention to the relevance of conservation values (Schwartz *et al.*, 2012) could add significant understanding to the corruption motivation process.

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SUMMARY

Endangered Resources: The Role of Organizational Justice and Interpersonal Trust as Signals for Workplace Corruption

This study examines workplace corruption from the perspective of individual psychological processes. Existing literature has shown how corrupt behaviours can emerge from various kinds of motivations, including manipulation, retaliation, and conformity. This research suggests yet another path, where corruption stems from a motivation to preserve resources that individuals perceive to be threatened by their professional environment. As such, the study is grounded in conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001).

We put forward an original model that introduces the notion of resource signals. An enrichment of original COR theory, resource signals correspond to individuals' perceptions that the work environment is supportive, or, otherwise, of their need for resource development and preservation. Specifically, the study tests a moderated mediation model where a sense of mastery, a personal resource, moderates the impact of resource signals, including distributive justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal trust, on occupational corruption.

Results are drawn from a sample of French public sector employees ($n = 575$). They validate the hypothesized mediating role of trust between both facets of organizational justice and measures of corruption, including bribery and property deviance. An indirect negative effect, however, is strongest between procedural justice and workplace corruption. As hypothesized, a sense of mastery significantly moderates the link between trust and both corruption types.

This research contributes to both theory and practice. By integrating resource signals within a COR framework, it shows that corrupt behaviours are to be gauged against interacting motivations for preserving psychological resources. Consequently, this study also suggests that organizations should go beyond ethics and procedures, and to consider workplace corruption as a potential symptom of organizational signals perceived as threats to individuals' valued resources.

KEYWORDS: workplace behaviour, organizational justice, interpersonal trust, sense of mastery, conservation of resources theory.

RÉSUMÉ

Ressources en danger: Le rôle de la justice organisationnelle et de la confiance interpersonnelle en tant que signaux de corruption dans les milieux de travail

Cette étude examine la corruption au travail sous l'angle des processus psychologiques individuels. La littérature démontre que les comportements de corruption découlent de diverses motivations, tels la manipulation, les représailles et le conformisme. Cette recherche, fondée sur la théorie de la conservation des

ressources (CDR, voir Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), propose une nouvelle voie, où la corruption résulte de la motivation des individus à préserver leurs ressources lorsqu'ils les jugent menacées par leur environnement professionnel.

Nous proposons un modèle original qui introduit la notion de « signaux de ressources » (*resource signals* en anglais). Ce concept, qui vient enrichir la théorie CDR, correspond à la perception des individus quant au soutien offert dans leur milieu de travail ou, sinon, au besoin de développer des ressources et de les préserver. Plus précisément, cette étude teste un modèle de médiation modérée dans lequel le sentiment de maîtrise, une ressource personnelle, modère l'impact des signaux de ressources (justice distributive, justice procédurale, confiance interpersonnelle) sur la corruption au travail.

Les résultats proviennent d'un échantillon d'employés du secteur public français ($n = 575$). Ils valident l'hypothèse du rôle médiateur de la confiance entre les différentes facettes de la justice organisationnelle et les mesures de la corruption, notamment le soudoiment et la déviance de propriété. Cependant, l'effet négatif indirect de la justice procédurale sur la corruption au travail est plus marqué. Conformément aux hypothèses formulées, le sentiment de maîtrise modère significativement le lien entre la confiance et les deux types de corruption.

Les apports de cette recherche sont théoriques et pratiques. L'intégration des signaux de ressources dans un modèle CDR montre la nécessité d'évaluer les comportements corrompus selon les motivations à préserver les ressources psychologiques. Corollairement, cette étude suggère aux organisations de dépasser le cadre de l'éthique et des procédures afin d'envisager la corruption comme un éventuel symptôme de la perception de signaux organisationnels menaçants pour les ressources individuelles.

MOTS-CLÉS : comportement au travail, justice organisationnelle, confiance interpersonnelle, sentiment de maîtrise, théorie de la conservation des ressources.

RESUMEN

Recursos en peligro: el papel de la justicia organizacional y la confianza interpersonal como señales de corrupción en el lugar de trabajo

Este estudio examina la corrupción en el lugar de trabajo desde la perspectiva de los procesos psicológicos individuales. La literatura demuestra que los comportamientos corruptos pueden surgir de diversos tipos de motivaciones, como la manipulación, las represalias y el conformismo. Esta investigación, basada en la teoría de la conservación de los recursos (CDR) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), sugiere una vía adicional, en la que la corrupción surge de una motivación para preservar recursos que las personas perciben como amenazados por su entorno profesional.

Proponemos un modelo original que introduce el concepto de señales de recursos, lo que constituye un enriquecimiento de la teoría original de la CDR. Las

señales de recursos corresponden a las percepciones individuales del ambiente de trabajo, considerándolo favorable o desfavorable a sus respectivas necesidades de desarrollo y preservación de sus respectivos recursos individuales. Más específicamente, este estudio evalúa un modelo de mediación moderada donde un sentido de control, un recurso personal, modera el impacto de las señales de recursos (justicia distributiva, justicia procesal, confianza interpersonal) en la corrupción ocupacional.

Los resultados provenientes de una muestra de empleados del sector público francés ($n = 575$) validan la hipótesis del rol mediador de la confianza entre ambas facetas de la justicia organizacional y las medidas de corrupción como el soborno y apropiación indebida. Sin embargo, el efecto negativo indirecto de la justicia procesal en la corrupción ocupacional es más pronunciado. De acuerdo con las hipótesis formuladas, la sensación de control modera significativamente el vínculo entre la confianza y ambos tipos de corrupción.

Los aportes de esta investigación son teóricos y prácticos. Con la integración de las señales de recursos en un modelo de CDR se demuestra que los comportamientos corruptos deben ser medidos tomando en cuenta las motivaciones de preservación de los recursos psicológicos y sus interacciones. Como corolario, este estudio también sugiere que las organizaciones deberían ir más allá del marco de la ética y los procedimientos, y considerar la corrupción ocupacional como un síntoma potencial de las señales organizacionales percibidas como amenazas a los recursos individuales valorizados.

PALABRAS CLAVES: comportamiento en el trabajo, justicia organizacional, confianza interpersonal, sensación de control, teoría de la conservación de recursos.