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Emerald International Journal of Conflict Management

The Role of Organizational Structure and Deviant Status in Employees' Reactions to and Acceptance of Workplace Deviance

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Abstract

Purpose: To examine the role of deviant status (lower vs. higher rank) and organizational structure (vertical vs. horizontal) on individuals' responses to workplace deviance.

Design/methodology/approach: Two studies (N = 472) were designed to examine the role of deviant status and organizational structure in responses to workplace deviance. Study 1 (N = 272) manipulated deviant status and organizational structure. Study 2 (N = 200) also manipulated deviant status but focused on participants' subjective evaluations of the organizational structure of their workplace.

Findings: Study 1 found that participants reported lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager (vs. by a subordinate), regardless of the type of organizational structure. Study 2 extended this finding by showing that the indirect effect of organizational structure (vertical vs. horizontal) on turnover intention via job satisfaction and organizational commitment was moderated by deviant status: when the deviant's status was higher, working in a vertical (vs. horizontal) organization was associated with decreased job satisfaction and commitment, which in turn was associated with a higher level of turnover intentions.

Originality/value: The findings broaden our understanding of how individuals respond to deviance at the workplace, by simultaneously considering the effects of organizational structure (vertical vs. horizontal) and deviant status (upward vs. downward directions of deviance).

Keywords: organizational structure, status, workplace deviance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention

Paper type: Research paper.

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Employee mistreatment is common. Recent statistics highlight that half of American employees have left a company due to problems concerning mistreatment by their managers (Harter and Adkins, 2015; Herrera, 2018). In a recent high-profile case, the CEO of Uber was caught on camera arguing with an employee (a driver) regarding the company's fares – being especially aggressive towards the employee, which constitutes a form of workplace deviance. The video went viral on the internet focusing on the CEO's outburst which was widely criticized, and for which he later apologized. Research finds that in organizational settings, such examples of mistreatment are more commonly directed downwards to subordinates than upwards (from subordinates to superiors) (e.g., Cortina *et al*., 2001).

There is emerging evidence that downward mistreatment such as abusive supervision might be associated with organizational structure. For example, the negative impact of abusive supervision of subordinates (downward) on contextual performance of subordinates (e.g., job dedication) is weaker in more horizontally structured organizations compared with vertically structured ones (Aryee *et al*., 2008). However, Aryee *et al*. (2008) did not consider upward mistreatment. In addition, previous investigations have made more reference to the primary role of status than to the organizational structure in relation to such deviance (e.g., "rule-breaking", "cheating", "free riding", "being late for meetings", "verbally abusing a co-worker"; see Abrams *et al*., 2013; Fiddick and Cummins, 2007; Karelaia and Keck, 2013; Pinto *et al*., 2010; Randsley de Moura and Abrams, 2013).

In the present research, we set out to examine how reactions to mistreatment are affected by type of organizational structure and the status of the person displaying workplace deviance vis-à-vis the person who is the target of the deviant act. We focus on one common example of workplace deviance, namely mistreatment in the form of incivility, which is defined as "low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Deviant behaviors (e.g., incivility) are

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characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Specifically, we investigated whether the status of the deviant person (upwards *vs.* downwards deviance) in conjunction with organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical) affects the way individuals' reactions to incivility on a) psychological perception and affective outcomes (acceptability and discomfort of deviant behaviors) and b) workplace related outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention).

Power, workplace mistreatment and its consequences

Facing a deviant behavior by a high-status member, such as a leader, is likely to be linked to power - an asymmetrical control over resources and other persons' outcomes (Anderson and Brion, 2014; ~~Emerson, 1962;~~ Fiske, 2010; Keltner *et al*., 2003). Power and status are closely associated and mutually reinforcing (Fragale *et al*., 2011; Magee and Galinsky, 2008) because the distribution of resources may be determined by status within groups (French and Raven, 1959), and individuals' power may be derived from their membership in high social status subgroups (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Indeed, social hierarchies and leadership positions in organizations tend to provide both power and status to leaders or people in higher occupational position (Keltner *et al*., 2003~~; Messé *et al*., 1992~~). Therefore, in organizations, research on power has focused on examining the negative consequences of deviant behavior by individuals who hold power in their group or in society (e.g., Bargh *et al*., 1995; Fiske, 1993). Many researchers have found that repeated exercise of power can lead to subordinate derogation (Georgesen and Harris, 2006), socially inappropriate behavior (e.g., Dubois *et al*., 2015; Lammers *et al*., 2010; Olekalns *et al*., 2014; Yap *et al*., 2013), aggression (Fast and Chen, 2009), corruption (Maner and Mead, 2010; Kipnis, 1972), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), and incivility (Hershcovis *et al*., 2017; Pearson *et al*., 2000).

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Furthermore, studies have found injurious effects of workplace mistreatment on targeted employees. For example, Pearson *et al*. (2000) found qualitative evidence for being a target of rude behaviors resulting in decreased commitment to the organization and work efforts, wasted work time, and increased turnover intentions. In a similar vein, Cortina and colleagues (2001) reported that experiences of interpersonal mistreatment were associated with lower job satisfaction, increased job withdrawal, and greater psychological distress. In a meta-analysis, Hershcovis and Barling (2010) found that deviant behaviors instigated by supervisors had a stronger impact than aggression instigated by co-workers on several organizational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, affective commitment and turnover intention). Similarly, other studies found that the effects of workplace deviance on health-related outcomes (e.g., strain) and workplace-related outcomes can vary by the deviant's status (Oore *et al*., 2010; Laschinger *et al*., 2009).

Deviance, Deviant Status, and Reactions to deviance

In organizations, employees expect that their leaders should take responsibility for the well-being of their employees (Hollander, 1992~~; Hollander and Julian, 1969~~; Messick et al., 1983). Accordingly, leaders who behave in a deviant manner are likely to be perceived as deviating from social expectations (see Karelaia and Keck, 2013), and this deviation can lead to strong negative feelings towards such leaders (Abrams *et al*., 2014; Skarlicki and Folger, 1997; Wahrman, 1970). Consistent with this idea, prior studies have found that high-status actors (e.g., manager or leader) cheating on a low-status victim (e.g., subordinate) are evaluated more harshly than low-status actors cheating on high-status victims (Fiddick and Cummins, 2007). However, there is also evidence that individuals may accept deviance from high-status group members, such as problematic leaders (Shapiro *et al*., 2011). Moreover, previous research on the relationship between norm violation and negative emotions finds that how negative people feel when they face an act of deviance is shaped by the perceived

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acceptability of that deviant act (e.g., Moon *et al*., 2018) which, in turn, can affect their reactions to that deviant act. In line with this, past research showed that negative affect was elicited by violation of expectations (e.g., Topolinski and Strack, 2015). In the present research, we examined affective response to deviance focusing on discomfort, defined as unpleasant subjective state (similar to stress and anxiety), as a psychological outcome of experiencing deviant behavior at work place (Li *et al*., 2016; Moon *et al*., 2018) keeping with past research that has demonstrated the impact of downward mistreatment such as abusive supervision on employee's psychological distress (Li *et al*., 2016). Discomfort as work-related stress has also been shown to impact on work-related processes such as turnover intentions (Hoel *et al*., 2003; Laschinger *et al*., 2009). Furthermore, individuals' immune, cardiovascular, and metabolic systems can be impacted by stressors such downward deviance as indicated by the allostatic load model of stress (Ganster and Rosen, 2013).~~Discomfort, defined as unpleasant subjective state (similar to stress and anxiety), is an important outcome of deviant behaviors (Moon et al., 2018) that can subsequently impact on workplace related outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Hoel *et al*., 2003; Laschinger *et al*., 2009).~~

Reactions to deviance can also be impacted by the status of the person displaying the deviance. As such, we might expect different responses if the outburst towards the Uber driver would have been displayed by a co-worker and not by the CEO. What is less clear is whether the broader context impacts on reactions to workplace deviance. Specifically, in the following studies we examined the role of organizational structure in the relationship between the status of the actors in displays of workplace deviance and workplace related consequences.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is defined as the total of the ways in which the work is

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divided into different tasks, achieving coordination (Mintzberg, 1979). The most widespread distinction in organizational structure is that of vertical (mechanistic) versus horizontal (organic) structural forms (e.g., Ambrose and Schminke, 2003; Aryee *et al*., 2008; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Slevin and Covin, 1997). Vertical organizational structures tend to be rigid, hierarchical, tight and formalized, characterized by centralized power/control/authority and decision-making, rigid communication channels, and require a strict adherence to formal rules and regulations. In contrast, horizontal organizational structures tend to be more flexible, decentralized, in which adherence to formal rules and procedures is less emphasized, and managers and subordinates can work together to make decisions (Ambrose and Schminke, 2003; Aryee *et al*., 2008; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Campbell *et al*., 2004; Rahman and Zanzi, 1995; Schminke *et al*., 2000). Thus, the vertical organizational structure would exacerbate the power imbalance between leaders and subordinates that facilitates more deviant behaviors by high-ranking individuals than by low-ranking individuals. In contrast, the horizontal organizational structure would reduce the power imbalance between leaders and subordinates that minimize the tendency of leaders to act in oppressive and abusive ways towards their subordinates.

Organizational structure has been found to impact on important outcomes in the workplace. For example, when the organizational structure is less centralized and formalized, social interaction among members of the organization is more favorable (Chen and Huang, 2007). Moreover, a vertical organizational structure can nurture a sense of powerlessness leading to decreased interpersonal facilitation and job dedication in the context of abusive supervision (Aryee *et al*., 2008; related to H4 and H6).

Given the association between power dynamics and the characteristics of vertical versus horizontal organizational structures (cf. Flynn *et al*., 2011; Magee and Galinsky, 2008; Moon *et al*., 2018), mistreatment from high-ranking individuals may also be viewed as being

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more common and more acceptable in vertical (vs. horizontal) organizational contexts (related to H2b and H5). Therefore, we expect that type of organizational structure will affect the psychological and behavioral outcomes provoked by displays of workplace deviance from a leader versus a subordinate.

Overview of the Present Research and Hypotheses

Existing literature highlights the effects of undesirable acts of workplace deviance (mistreatment, deviance, incivility) on psychological perceptions and affective outcomes for individuals (e.g. Moon *et al*., 2018; Porath and Pearson, 2012) and workplace related outcomes (e.g., Barnes *et al*., 2015; Hershcovis and Barling, 2010; Oore *et al*., 2010; Laschinger *et al*., 2009). As such, we have focused on these two categories of outcomes in the present studies: a) *psychological perception and affective outcomes* (acceptability and discomfort of deviant behaviors) and b) *workplace related outcomes* (job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions).

Across two studies we examined the role of status and organizational structure in individuals' responses to displays of workplace deviance. Participants either imagined working in an experimental vignette (Study 1) or we recruited participants who reported working (Study 2) in a workplace with horizontal or vertical organizational structure. We expected that the negative effects of deviant behaviors on the two categories of outcomes would be affected by organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical) and deviant status (manager vs. subordinate) and tested the following predictions:

H1. Workplace deviance displayed by managers will lead participants to experience more discomfort than workplace deviance displayed by a lower (subordinate) or equal (peer; Study 1 only) status deviant (H1a: main effect of deviant status). This effect will be stronger in horizontally structured organizations than in vertically structured organizations (H1b: deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect).

H2. Acceptability of deviant behavior from managers will be greater than from subordinates or peers (Study 1 only) (H2a: main effect of deviant status), *and* workplace

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deviance will be judged as more acceptable in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organization structure condition (H2b: deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect).

H3. Lower levels of job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and higher turnover intentions will be reported by participants in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organization structure (H3a: main effect of organizational structure), and when the workplace deviant behavior is displayed by a manager (vs. subordinate or peer) (H3b: main effect of deviant status).

H4. A deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect is also expected in relation to workplace related outcomes, such that participants will report less job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and higher turnover intentions when the deviant is a manager, especially in the vertical structure compared to the horizontal structure.

Previous research has shown that individuals' perception of mistreatment is affected by the interaction between cultural context and deviant status. Given the role of national cultural context moderating the effect of acceptability on emotional reactions (e.g., Günsoy, 2019; Moon *et al*., 2018), we expected a similar moderation effect but with organizational structure.

H5. Acceptability of deviant behavior will mediate the relationship between deviant status and discomfort, and this indirect path will be moderated by type of organizational structure.

We further explore whether the indirect effect of deviant status x organizational structure interaction via job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention would be observed. This is explored given the relationships between the organizational outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention, with job satisfaction and organizational commitment playing the role of predictors of turnover intentions (e.g., Abrams and Randsley de Moura, 2001; Halbesleben, 2010; Randsley de Moura *et al*., 2009; see Harrison *et al*., 2006 for a review).

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H6. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment will mediate the relationship between deviant status x organizational structure interaction and turnover intentions.

In order to assist with the interpretation of the results, we will first describe in detail the methodology of both Studies 1 and 2 and then present the results of both studies together.

Method: Study 1

In Study 1, we manipulated organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical) and deviant status (manager vs. subordinate vs. peers) using an experimental vignette methodology (EVM) to test causal effects (cf. Aguinis and Bradley, 2014; Allen *et al*., 2014). We asked participants to imagine themselves working in an organization structured vertically or horizontally and then to read a vignette describing a deviant behavior exhibited by a colleague at work who held a position as manager or was a subordinate or a peer. Subsequently, participants reported their discomfort in the face of deviant behavior, acceptability of deviant behaviors, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions in the imagined context.

Participants and Design

To reach a diverse sample (in terms of gender, age, job occupation), a total of 276 participants from the United States were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk© (MTurk; cf. Buhrmester *et al*., 2011) who completed an online survey presented as a study on managing relationships in organizational contexts. Four participants who failed the attention check question were excluded, leaving a sample of 272 American participants for analyses (M_{age}=34.79, SD_{age}=11.17; 118 women; ethnic background: 74% White American, 7% Hispanic, 6% White (other), 6% African American, 2% Mixed, 3% Asian American, 1%

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Black (other), 1% Asian (other)).[1] Participants were assigned randomly to one of six conditions in a 2 (organizational structure: horizontal vs. vertical) x 3 (deviant status: manager vs. subordinate vs. peer) between-participants design.

Procedure

Participants were asked to imagine themselves being hired by a reputable company, 'ABC Inc.', which was described as a 'global leading company' and 'top 10 global brand'. The company was described as a place where 'most job seekers would like to work' and as having a 'fair' and 'trusting' work environment. The general description of the company was adopted from Moon *et al*. (2018).

Next, participants were assigned randomly to read one of two paragraphs that depicted the organizational structure as either vertical or horizontal. The scenarios were also adapted from Moon *et al*. (see 2018; Study 2):

> *Vertical organization.* In this condition, 'ABC Inc.' was described as having a 'clear hierarchy' and that 'those in subordinate positions are expected to be aware of the existing ranks and show respect towards managers'. Moreover, 'the company puts strong emphasis on compliance and rule following; as a result, managers and their decisions are hardly challenged by their subordinates'.
>
> *Horizontal organization.* In this condition, 'ABC Inc.' was described as having 'no clear hierarchy structures' and that 'those in authority treat subordinates with respect and do not pull rank'. Moreover, 'the company puts strong emphasis on equality and critical thinking; as a result, managers and their decisions are often challenged by their subordinates'.

[1] Participants could pass the attention check by doing the following: 'To show that you have read instructions, please ignore the question below about how you are feeling and instead check only 'Nervous'.

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To manipulate status, participants read one of three imaginary scenarios involving either a manager or a subordinate or a peer putting forward a request. In the adapted scenario (Moon *et al*., 2018), participants read that their colleague starts to behave badly in the office after they declined their colleagues' request. For example, this colleague stopped replying to emails, saying hello when entering to a room, and stopped talking using forms of polite request. The scenario was accompanied by a visual ladder to provide an illustration of the hierarchical relationship between the participant and the requester, who was depicted as equidistantly lower (subordinate) or higher (manager) or equal (peer) on the ladder. This was to ensure that all participants had a comparable understanding of the requester's status.

After reading the scenario, participants completed a series of measures which we describe below.

Materials

Organizational structure manipulation check. Participants responded to four manipulation check items that assessed participants' impressions of the level of hierarchy in the organizational setting of ABC (e.g., 'To what extent is the power unequally distributed between the seniors and the juniors at ABC?'; 1= *not at all* to 7= *very much so;* α = .95).

Deviant status manipulation check. Participants responded to two manipulation check items that probed impressions of relative rank vis-à-vis the deviant (1= *has much less power and influence than me* to 7= *has much more power and influence than me* and *1= enjoys much less status and respect than me* to 7= *enjoys much more status and respect than me*; $r(270) = .88$, $p < .001$).

Discomfort caused by deviant behaviors. ~~Discomfort, defined as unpleasant subjective state (similar to stress and anxiety), is an important outcome of deviant behaviors (Moon et al., 2018) that can subsequently impact on workplace related outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Hoel *et al*., 2003; Laschinger *et al*., 2009).~~ Participants

indicated how uncomfortable this situation would make them feel using a 7-point scale ("Please rate how uncomfortable this situation would make you feel"; 1= *not uncomfortable at all* to 7= *very uncomfortable*).

Acceptability of deviant behaviors. Participants answered three questions using a 7-point scale to indicate how acceptable, appropriate, and tolerable they considered the deviant's behaviors to be (e.g., "How acceptable/appropriate/tolerable it would be for this person to behave in the ways indicated above?"; 1= *completely unacceptable / inappropriate / intolerable* to 7= *perfectly acceptable / appropriate / tolerable*; α = .92).

Job satisfaction. A commonly used job satisfaction scale developed by Warr *et al*. (1979) was employed to assess participants' job satisfaction (see Heritage *et al*., 2015) with regard to 10 aspects of the organization (e.g. "the freedom to choose your own method of working"; "your immediate boss"; "the amount of responsibility you are given") (1= *extremely dissatisfied*, 7= *extremely satisfied*). Responses were averaged to compute a Job Satisfaction score (α = .94).

Organizational commitment. To keep the length of the questionnaire brief, we selected three items from the 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday *et al*., 1979): "I would be willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization to be successful", "I would feel very little loyalty to this organization", and "It would take very little change in my circumstances to cause me to leave this organization" (1= *completely disagree* to 7= *completely agree*; α = .56).[2]

Turnover intention. Two items adopted from Randsley de Moura *et al*.'s (2009) turnover intention scale were used to measure participants' intention to leave the organization

[2] We included all three items in calculating the index for organizational commitment because the average inter-item correlation was .295.

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("I would be considering the possibility of leaving this organization", and "If a similar job offer was on the table, I would consider to leave the organization" (1= *completely disagree* to 7= *completely agree,* $r_{SB}(270) = .90$, $p < .001$).

Method: Study 2

In Study 2, we have replicated Study 1, slightly changing the methodology to address the hypothetical nature of Study 1. For Study 2, we recruited participants who were in employment and asked them to describe the organizational structure of the company in which they were employed. In this study, we focused on manager and subordinate conditions only due to the lack of differences between subordinate and peer conditions in Study 1 as will be described later. As in Study 1, participants read a vignette describing deviant behaviors exhibited by a colleague at their organization and indicated their reactions to these behaviors. We tested the same hypotheses as in Study 1.

Participants and Design

A total of 230 participants were recruited online from the United States using Amazon Mechanical Turk©. The study was only available for participants who have not participated in the previous study. Six respondents were excluded for failing the attention check question. Based on the inter-raters' agreement of 1, we also excluded 24 respondents who did not clearly identify the structure of their organization as either vertical or horizontal in the description (e.g., 'There is a hierarchy structure, but the subordinates have some input in decisions and much freedom to do their jobs') or who did not provide valid responses to the question (e.g., 'it is a construction company'). The remaining sample of 200 American participants was included in the analyses reported below (M_{age}=35.72, SD_{age}=11.17; 88 women; ethnic background: 68% White American, 10% White (other), 8% Asian American, 6% African American, 5% Hispanic, 2% Mixed, 1% Black (other), 1% Other, 1% Asian (other); current occupation status: 17% Professional, 14% Administrative, 14% Manager,

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12% Education, 12% Other, 11% Sales/Marketing, 11% Self-employed, 7% Trade/labor, 6% Medical, the other occupation status represented in the sample each accounted for < 5% of the sample).

Procedure

Participants were first asked to read two paragraphs that explained characteristics of a vertical versus a horizontal organizational structure in the workplace (we used the same descriptions employed in Study 1). Next, using these descriptions, participants were asked to describe the organizational setting in which they were employed at that time and then to rate five items assessing participants' perceived level of hierarchy in their organizational setting (the same four items for the organizational structure manipulation check were used in Study 1 and 1 new item was added 'how would you classify the organization in terms of structure'; 1= *completely vertical* to 7= *completely horizontal*). Next, participants were assigned randomly to imagine themselves occupying the role of a manager or a subordinate in their organization and read one of the two imaginary scenarios about a colleague in a manager or a subordinate role requesting help with 'writing a proposal' due 'tomorrow' as in Study 1.

Materials

Manipulation check. The same deviant status manipulation check was used as in Study1, $r(198) = .90$, $p < .001$.

Dependent variables. As in Study 1, participants responded to items assessing their perceived organizational structure ($\alpha = .87$), discomfort in the face of deviant behavior, acceptability of deviant behaviors ($\alpha = .91$), job satisfaction ($\alpha = .92$), organizational commitment ($\alpha = .66$),[3] and turnover intentions [$r_{SB}(198) = .91$, $p < .001$].

Results and Discussion

[3] Internal consistency of organizational commitment was slightly lower than .70. However, the average inter-item correlation was .393. Hence, we used all three items as a measurement for organizational commitment.

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All ANOVAs reported below used organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical) and deviant status (Study 1: manager vs. subordinate vs. peer; Study 2: peer condition was excluded) as independent variables unless indicated otherwise. We report the results of Studies 1 and 2 back-to-back unless indicated otherwise. Hypotheses and outcomes for Study 1 and Study 2 are summarized in Table 1. Table 2 presents the correlations between the study variables, and Table 3 displays descriptive statistics.

Manipulation Checks and Preliminary Analysis

Organizational structure. In Study 1, a t-test with type of organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical) as the independent variable and the composite perceived organizational culture measure as the outcome variable revealed that participants in the vertical condition perceived the organization to be more hierarchical (M=6.16, SD=0.90) than did participants in the horizontal condition (M=2.24, SD=1.09), $t(270) = 32.38$, $p < .001$, Hedges' $g = 3.94$, $CI_{95\%}$[3.68, 4.16]. Thus, our manipulation of organizational structure worked as expected.

Perceived Organizational Structure. In Study 2, we did not manipulate organizational structure, instead we measured participants' perceived organizational structure of their current organization. A t-test was conducted with participants' descriptions of their current organizational structure (coded 0= horizontal, 1= vertical) as the independent variable and the composite perceived verticality level of organizational structure as the outcome variable. The result revealed that participants who identified their organizational structure as being vertical indicated that their organization was more hierarchically structured (M=5.56, SD=0.85) than did participants who identified their organizational structure as being horizontal (M=3.18, SD=0.89), $t(198) = -18.99$, $p < .001$, $CI_{95\%}$[-2.62, -2.13], Hedges' g = 2.73. In addition, the mean scores for both vertical and horizontal organizational structures were significantly different from the scale midpoint ($M_{vertical} > 4.0$, $M_{horizontal} < 4.0$),

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$t_{vertical}(119) = 19.97$, $p < .001$, $CI_{95\%}[1.40, 1.70]$, and $t_{horizontal}(79) = -8.29$, $p < .001$, $CI_{95\%}[-1.02, -0.63]$.

Deviant status. In Study 1, an ANOVA with the manipulation check items concerning deviant status revealed a significant main effect of deviant status, $F(1, 266) = 265.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .67$, demonstrating that participants evaluated the manager as having more power and status (M=5.62, SD=1.05) than the subordinate (M=2.47, SD=1.26; $CI_{95\%}$ = 2.87 to 3.42) or the peer (M=3.98, SD=.60; $CI_{95\%}[1.37, 1.91]$). Participants also evaluated the peer as having more power and status than the subordinate ($CI_{95\%}[1.24, 1.78]$).

In Study 2, participants evaluated the colleague in the manager condition as having more power and status (M=5.87, SD=0.81) than the colleague in the subordinate condition (M=2.62, SD=1.31), $F(1, 196) = 473.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .71$. The differentiation between the manager and the subordinate role was significant in both types of organizational structures, albeit more pronounced in the vertical organizational structure [$F(1, 196) = 484.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .71$] than in the horizontal organizational structure [$F(1, 196) = 102.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$], resulting in a significant interaction, $F(1, 196) = 36.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$. Thus, our manipulation of deviant status worked as expected in both studies.

Dependent Variables (Hypotheses Testing)

Discomfort caused by deviant behaviors (H1a and H1b). The results of Study 1 revealed a significant main effect of deviant status, $F(1, 266) = 4.34$, $p = .014$, $\eta_p^2 = .032$; participants reported that they would experience greater discomfort when confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager compared with by a subordinate ($p = .010$; $CI_{95\%}$ [0.13, 0.96]) or a peer ($p = .013$; $CI_{95\%}[0.11, 0.94]$), supporting our hypothesis (H1a). There was no difference in imagined discomfort between subordinate and peer conditions, $p = .916$. Other (main and interaction) effects were not significant, $F(1, 266) = 0.36$, $p = .549$, and $F(1,$

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266) = 0.75, p = .474, respectively. Therefore, H1b (deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect) was not supported.

Consistent with Study 1, the results of Study 2 revealed a significant main effect of deviant status, $F(1, 196) = 14.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$; participants reported that they would experience greater discomfort if confronted with a deviant behavior displayed by a manager compared with by a subordinate, supporting H1a. There was no significant main effect of organizational structure, $F(1, 196) = 1.44$, $p = .231$, and no deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect, $F(1, 196) = 2.82$, $p = .095$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$. Therefore, once again, H1b was not supported.

Acceptability of deviant behaviors (H2a and H2b). In Study 1, the main effects of organizational structure, $F(1, 266) = 1.18$, $p = .279$, and deviant status, $F(1, 266) = 0.74$, $p = .479$, and the interaction effect between the two independent variables, $F(1, 266) = 0.67$, $p = .514$, were not significant. Thus, H2a and H2b were not supported and H5 was therefore not tested in Study 1. However, absolute scores for acceptability indicated that workplace deviance was perceived as unacceptable, regardless of the condition (the mean was below the scale midpoint (4.0); $M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.26$), $t(271) = -25.43$, $p < .001$, $CI_{95\%}[-2.09, -1.79]$.

Unlike Study 1, Study 2 showed that the main effect of organizational structure was significant, $F(1, 196) = 5.02$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$, indicating that participants who reported working in a horizontally structured organization felt deviant behaviors to be more acceptable than did those working in a vertically structured organization. The main effect of deviant status (H2a was not supported), $F(1, 196) = 0.94$, $p = .333$, and the deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect (H2b was not supported), $F(1, 196) = 2.25$, $p = .135$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$, were not significant. As in Study 1, we found that the mean score for acceptability (M=2.30, SD=1.34) was significantly lower than the scale midpoint (4.0),

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indicating that workplace deviance was perceived as unacceptable, $t(199) = -17.99$, $p < .001$, $CI_{95\%}[-1.89, -1.52]$.

Job satisfaction (H3a, H3b, and H4). Study 1 revealed a significant main effect of organizational structure, $F(1, 266) = 96.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .047$; participants who imagined working in the horizontal organizational structure reported higher job satisfaction than did participants who imagined working in the vertical organizational structure, supporting H3a. The main effect of deviant status was also significant, $F(1, 266) = 10.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$; participants reported lower job satisfaction when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager compared to either by a subordinate ($p < .001$; $CI_{95\%}[-0.95, -0.35]$) or a peer ($p < .001$; $CI_{95\%}[-0.86, -0.26]$); the difference between peer and subordinate conditions was not significant ($p = .545$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.21, 0.39]$), supporting H3b (main effect of deviant status). The deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 266) = 1.44$, $p = .239$. Therefore, H4 was not supported.

In Study 2, the main effect of deviant status was not significant, $F(1, 196) = 0.12$, $p = .732$, which did not support H3b. However, as expected (H3a), the main effect of organizational structure was significant, $F(1, 196) = 9.21$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .045$, indicating that job satisfaction was higher among those working in a horizontal organizational structure compared with to those working in a vertical organizational structure. Unlike Study 1, the interaction between organizational structure and deviant status was significant, $F(1, 196) = 5.43$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .027$. Further analysis revealed that participants working in a vertical organizational structure reported lower job satisfaction when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by the manager than did participants working in a horizontal organizational structure, $F(1, 196) = 14.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .067$; this difference was not significant when the deviant was the subordinate, $F(1, 196) = 0.26$, $p = .614$. The

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other simple effects were not significant, $F_{vertical}(1, 196) = 2.47$, $p = .118$, $F_{horizontal}(1, 196) = 2.97$, $p = .086$. Thus, H4 was supported for job satisfaction in Study 2 (cf. Figure 1).

Organizational commitment (H3a, H3b, and H4). In Study 1, the main effect of organizational structure was significant, $F(1, 266) = 53.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$; participants who imagined working in the horizontal organizational structure reported higher commitment than did participants who imagined working in the vertical organizational structure, supporting H3a. As expected (H3b), the main effect of deviant status was also significant, $F(1, 266) = 2.94$, $p = .055$, $\eta_p^2 = .022$; participants reported lower commitment when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager compared to by a subordinate ($p = .019$; $CI_{95\%}$[-0.77, -0.07]), but not by a peer ($p = .105$); there was no significant difference between peer and subordinate conditions, $p = .45$, $CI_{95\%}$[-0.22, 0.48]. The deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 266) = 0.36$, $p = .698$, and, therefore, H4 was not supported.

In Study 2, the main effects of deviant status and organizational structure were not significant, $F(1, 196) = 0.13$, $p = .717$, $F(1, 196) = 4.40$, $p = .107$, respectively. Thus, H3a and H3b were not supported. However, unlike Study 1, the interaction between organizational structure and deviant status was significant, $F(1, 196) = 3.98$, $p = .047$, $\eta_p^2 = .020$. Exploring the differences of organizational structure within each condition of deviant status revealed that participants working in a vertical organizational structure reported lower commitment when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager than did participants working in a horizontal organizational structure, $F(1, 196) = 5.54$, $p = .020$, $\eta_p^2 = .028$; this difference was not significant when the deviant was the subordinate, $F(1, 196) = 0.20$, $p = .658$. The other simple effects were not significant, $F_{vertical}(1, 196) = 2.92$, $p = .089$, $F_{horizontal}(1, 196) = 1.39$, $p = .24$. Thus, H4 was supported for organizational commitment in Study 2 (see Figure 2).

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Turnover intentions (H3a, H3b, and H4). As predicted (H3a), Study 1 revealed a significant main effect of type of organizational structure, $F(1, 266) = 61.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$; participants who imagined working in the vertical organizational structure reported higher turnover intention than did participants who imagined working in the horizontal organizational structure. The main effect of deviant status was also significant, $F(1, 266) = 7.57$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; participants reported higher turnover intention when confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by a manager compared to either by a subordinate ($p = .002$; $CI_{95\%}[0.26, 1.18]$) or a peer ($p < .001$; $CI_{95\%}[0.38, 1.29]$); there was no significant difference between peer and subordinate conditions ($p = .626$), supporting H3b. The deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect was not significant, $F(1,266) = 1.35$, $p = .261$ (H4 was not supported).

In Study 2, the main effects of deviant status and organizational structure were not significant, $F(1, 196) = 0.34$, $p = .562$, $F(1, 196) = 1.49$, $p = .224$, respectively. Thus, H3a and H3b were not supported. However, unlike in Study 1, there was a significant deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect, $F(1, 196) = 5.07$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$; participants working in a vertical organizational structure reported higher turnover intention when they imagined being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by the manager compared to the subordinate, $F(1, 196) = 5.02$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$; this difference was absent among participants working in a horizontal organizational structure, $F(1, 196) = 1.16$, $p = .283$. Exploring the differences of organizational structure within each condition of deviant status revealed that participants working in a vertical organizational structure reported higher turnover intention when imagining being confronted with deviant behaviors displayed by the manager than did participants working in a horizontal organizational structure, $F(1, 196) = 5.87$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .029$; this difference was absent when the deviant

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was the subordinate, $F(1, 196) = 0.79$, $p = .779$. Thus, H4 was supported for turnover intentions in Study 2 (see Figure 3).

Mediation Analysis (Study 1: H5 and H6)

In Study 1, H5 was not tested because H2a and H2b were not supported. We also expected deviant status to predict turnover intentions mediated by job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and this relationship to be moderated by organizational structure (H6). As no interaction effects were found between deviant status and organizational structure, we did not test H6 directly. Instead, we conducted a mediation analysis separately for the two predictors (deviant status and organizational structure) for further exploration.

The above analyses revealed how our main dependent measures, *job satisfaction*, *commitment*, and *turnover intention*, were affected by deviant status (manager vs. subordinate; the peer condition was excluded in the mediation analysis because it was not always distinguished from the subordinate condition in the above analysis) and organizational structure (horizontal vs. vertical). Based on these findings, we sought to examine the possibility of an indirect effect of deviant status and organizational structure via job satisfaction and commitment on turnover intention ~~(these variables were negatively correlated with turnover intention (DV), $r_{\text{job satisfaction}}(178) = -.54$, $p < .001$, $r_{\text{commitment}}(178) = -.62$, $p < .001$)~~. Following the procedure outlined in Hayes (2013, model 4), we explored two mediation models (*model 1*: deviant status (IV: coded 0 = subordinate, 1 = manager), turnover intention (DV); *model 2*: organizational structure (IV: coded 0 = horizontal, 1 = vertical), turnover intention (DV), given the interaction between organizational structure and deviant status was not significant. All continuous variables were standardized prior to the analysis in order to obtain standardized coefficients (see Friedrich, 1982). We generated 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals using 10000 bootstrap samples.

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In model 1, as shown before, deviant status had a strong effect on perceived job satisfaction, b = -.52, SE = 0.15, $CI_{95\%}$[-0.81, -0.23], as well as organizational commitment, b = -.31, SE = 0.15, $CI_{95\%}$[-0.60, -0.02]. Controlling for the two mediators, the effect of deviant status on turnover intention was no longer significant, b = .13, SE = 0.12, $CI_{95\%}$[-0.10, 0.35] vs. b = .40, SE = 0.15, $CI_{95\%}$[0.11, 0.69]. As expected, deviant status had an indirect effect on turnover intention via job satisfaction, b = .13, SE = 0.06, $CI_{95\%}$[0.05, 0.27] and organizational commitment, b = .14, SE = 0.07, $CI_{95\%}$[0.02, 0.30] (see Figure 4). These results demonstrate that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment fully mediated the relationship between deviant status and turnover intention. Thus, when the deviant was a manager, job satisfaction and commitment were decreased, which subsequently was associated with a higher level of turnover intention.

In model 2, as shown before, organizational structure had a strong effect on perceived job satisfaction, b = -.98, SE = 0.13, $CI_{95\%}$[-1.24, -0.72], as well as perceived commitment, b = -.75, SE = .14, $CI_{95\%}$[-1.02, -0.47]. Controlling for the two mediators, the effect of organizational structure on turnover intention was no longer significant, b = .15, SE = 0.13, $CI_{95\%}$[-0.11, 0.40] vs. b = .72, SE = 0.14, $CI_{95\%}$[0.44, 0.99]. As expected, organizational structure had an indirect effect on turnover intention via not only job satisfaction, b = .24, SE = 0.09, $CI_{95\%}$[0.07, 0.43] but also commitment, b = .34, SE = 0.08, $CI_{95\%}$[0.19, 0.52] (see Figure 5). Once again, these results demonstrate that both job satisfaction and commitment fully mediated the relationship between organizational structure and turnover intention. Thus, imagining oneself as working in a vertical organization was associated with decreased job satisfaction and commitment, and in turn with a higher level of turnover intention.

Mediation Analysis (Study 2: H5 and H6)

The previous analyses of Study 2 showed differences in the extent to which deviant behaviors exhibited by a manager or a subordinate were found to be acceptable in horizontal

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or vertical organizational structures. We also found that deviant status had a *direct* effect on the discomfort experienced by participants when exposed to deviant behaviors. Following these findings, we explored the possibility of an *indirect* effect via acceptability of deviant behaviors (H5). To do so, we performed a *moderated mediation* analysis following the procedure outlined in Hayes (2013, model 7). Deviant status served as predictor variable (IV: coded 0 = subordinate, 1 = manager) and discomfort served as outcome variable (DV). In our model, the index denoting acceptability of deviant behaviors served as mediating variable, whilst organizational structure (coded 0 = horizontal, 1 = vertical) moderated the relationship between the IV and the DV, and the IV and the mediators.

Controlling for the mediator, the *direct* effect of deviant status on perceived discomfort was significant regardless of organizational structure, $t_{\text{deviant status}}(198) = 4.55$, $p < .001$, $b = .86$, $SE = 0.19$, $CI_{95\%}[0.49, 1.23]$. The main effect of organizational structure and the interaction between organizational structure and deviant status on acceptability were not significant, but the main effect of organizational structure was significant, $t_{\text{deviant status}}(198) = -2.68$, $p = .008$, $b = -.71$, $SE = 0.27$, $CI_{95\%}[-1.24, -0.19]$. Acceptability emerged as the reliable predictor of feelings of discomfort, $t_{\text{acceptability}}(198) = -2.99$, $p = .003$, $b = -.21$, $SE = 0.07$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.34, -0.07]$, with greater (lower) acceptability predicting lower (higher) levels of discomfort. Importantly, this analysis revealed that organizational structure moderated the *indirect* effect of deviant status on perceived discomfort via acceptability. For those working in a horizontal organizational structure, deviant status did not affect participants' levels of discomfort, $b = .02$, $SE = 0.07$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.12, 0.18]$. In contrast, for those working in a vertical organizational structure, a manager exhibiting deviant behaviors elicited lower discomfort than a subordinate exhibiting deviant behaviors as the former was perceived to be more acceptable than the latter, $b = -.10$, $SE = 0.09$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.21, -0.01]$. Thus, H5 was supported.

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Next, we tested H6. The previous analyses also established differences in how deviant behaviors exhibited by a manager and a subordinate affected *job satisfaction* and *organizational commitment* in horizontal and vertical organizational structures. We performed a moderated mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013; model 8) to examine if these possible mediators can account for differences in the way participants working in a horizontal or vertical organization reported *turnover intention* (DV) in response to being confronted with deviant behaviors exhibited by manager versus subordinate deviants. ~~Before running this analysis, we first examined the correlation between DV and mediators. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were negatively and significantly correlated with turnover intention, $r_{\text{job satisfaction}}(198) = -.62$, $p < .001$, $r_{\text{commitment}}(198) = -.66$, $p < .001$.~~

Controlling for the mediators, the main effects of organizational structure, deviant status and the interaction between organizational structure and deviant status were not significant, but job satisfaction, $t(198) = -6.03$, $p < .001$, $b = -.57$, $SE = 0.09$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.76, -0.38]$ and organizational commitment, $t(198) = -7.33$, $p < .001$, $b = -.57$, $SE = 0.08$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.72, -0.42]$ emerged as the reliable predictors of turnover intention, with greater (lower) job satisfaction and organizational commitment predicting lower (higher) levels of turnover intention. Importantly, this analysis revealed that deviant status moderated the *indirect* effect of organizational structure on turnover intention via job satisfaction and organizational commitment. When the deviant's status was lower, organizational structure did not affect participants' turnover intention, $b_{\text{job satisfaction}} = .07$, $SE = 0.14$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.21, 0.36]$, and $b_{\text{commitment}} = -.07$, $SE = 0.16$, $CI_{95\%}[-0.40, 0.24]$. However, when the deviant's status was higher, vertical organizational structure elicited higher turnover intentions compared with horizontal organizational structure as the former elicited lower job satisfaction, $b = .53$, $SE = 0.18$, $CI_{95\%}[0.23, 0.91]$, and organizational commitment, $b = .41$, $SE = 0.20$, $CI_{95\%}[0.04, 0.86]$, than the latter (see Figure 6). Therefore, H6 was supported.

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General Discussion

Across two studies, we examined the role of deviant status and organizational structure on participants' responses to workplace deviance. Specifically, we were interested in employees' acceptability and discomfort when facing deviant behaviors and its impact on their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. We tested how those perceptions would be moderated by the deviant status (subordinate *vs.* manager) and by organizational structure (horizontal *vs.* vertical). As expected, the results revealed that both deviant status *and* organizational structure impact on perceptions of deviance and organizational outcome variables.

These studies provide evidence for the role of organizational structure in employees' interpretations regarding deviance in the workplace. Previous literature has shown that the formality and hierarchy of vertical organizations has a stronger negative impact compared with horizontal organizations where formal rules and hierarchy are less emphasized (e.g., Aryee *et al*, 2008). Study 1 results were consistent with these past findings with participants working in a vertically structured organization reporting lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions than those employed in a horizontally structured organization (H3a and H3b).

The role of deviant status was also important to understand how employees perceived workplace deviance. When facing workplace deviant behaviors displayed by a manager (*vs.* subordinate), participants reported lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions (Study 1). However, we did not observe a significant interaction effect between deviant status and organizational structure in Study 1. One potential reason for the lack of this interaction effect could be the hypothetical nature of the organizational structure; it is possible that the participants' own organizational experience might be buffered by the counter-hypothetical nature of organizational structure. For example, some participants

may have felt that their organization was structured vertically (horizontally), but in the experiment, they were allocated in the condition of a horizontally (vertically) structured organization. To address this limitation, in Study 2, we relied on participants' own organizational experience and their perceptions of the organization in which they were employed to determine whether their experience was in line with a vertical or a horizontal organizational structure. This study revealed that the organizational outcomes were affected by the deviant status and its interaction with organizational structure.

Taken together, the results of Study 2 revealed that both organizational structure and deviant status impact on workers' perceptions of deviance and shape the way they relate with the organization. When facing deviance within the organization, participants working in a vertically structured organization reported lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions than participants employed in a horizontally structured organization, especially if the deviant occupies a higher hierarchical position (H4). These ~~results~~ findings are consistent with previous research that found abusive supervision of subordinates (downward) negatively affects organizational outcomes such as job dedication and this relationship was stronger in a more vertically structured organization compared to a horizontally structured one (Aryee *et al*., 2008; see Hu and Liu, 2017 for a review).

Furthermore, our research expands these findings by considering upward mistreatment (from subordinate to manager). Specifically, we found that overall workplace deviance is perceived as unacceptable, but compared with upward mistreatment, downward mistreatment causes greater discomfort (H1a). Regardless of acceptability, there was still negative consequences when facing workplace deviance, as participants reported lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions. Consistent with previous findings, the results showed that deviance within the workplace has a negative effect on the relationship between the organization and the employee, namely by decreasing

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employees' commitment to the organization and increasing their turnover intentions (e.g. Pearson *et al*., 2000). The fact that this impact was even more negative when the deviant occupied a higher status position is also consistent with previous studies (e.g. Hershcovis and Barling, 2010). Thus, our findings suggest more negative consequences for deviant leaders compared to deviant members (i.e., subordinates and peers) within a group (Abrams *et al*., 2013; Fiddick and Cummins, 2007; Karelaia and Keck, 2013; Pinto *et al*., 2010). Our findings from moderated mediation (H6) further confirmed that when the deviant's status was higher (manager vs. subordinate), working in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organization is associated with decreased job satisfaction and commitment, which results in a higher level of turnover intention.

Importantly, we found that the downward (vs. upward) mistreatment path onto discomfort was mediated by acceptability of deviant behaviors in the vertical organizational structure only (H5; Study 2). These results are consistent with a recent study which has demonstrated that individuals' perceptions of mistreatment by high and low status deviants were affected by organizational context (see Moon *et al*., 2018). Thus, the previous evidence that individuals' reactions to deviance are different depending on the power and status held by the deviant (e.g., Chekroun and Brauer, 2002; Porath *et al*., 2008) can be extended by considering the role of context, specifically the organizational structure. This result has practical implications; they suggest that leaders may benefit from understanding how deviant behavior is perceived according to the structure of the organization and the role of the perpetrator. For example, it might be important for them to learn that the acceptability of deviant behaviors differs according to the relative status of the deviants associated with organizational contexts, as workplace deviance seems to be less unacceptable when displayed by a leader than by an employee and when it occurs in a vertical organization. It is, however, important to highlight that both downward and upward workplace deviances were not

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perceived as permissible in both organizational structures. Hence, this practical possibility should not be misused in the real world and professionals and officials should understand cultural dynamics in organizational contexts.

In addition, this current research contributes to a growing body of research exploring mistreatment in organizations by considering both upward and downward mistreatment. Interest in downward mistreatment such as abusive supervision has mostly increased because this trend might be caused by the fact that downward mistreatment is more commonly observed compared to upward mistreatment in organizational contexts (cf. Cortina *et al*., 2001; Lim and Lee, 2011; Tepper, 2007). However, downward mistreatment coexists in real organizational life, but as the most serious type of deviant behavior (Black, 1976; cf., Cortina and Magley, 2003). Thus, the present research is strengthened by testing both upward and downward workplace deviance that can show the worker's psychology of how to react to deviant behaviors that is directed from a colleague of higher (lower) status toward one of lower (higher) status.

In these studies, we have only focused on discomfort as a key emotional variable because it may be implicated in workplace related outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover in response to subtle and blatant deviant behaviors in organizations (e.g., Hoel et al., 2003; Laschinger et al., 2009; cf. Moon et al., 2018). However, it is important to note the limitation to only that emotion because other emotions such as embarrassment, anger, fear and sadness may also be experienced when faced with deviant behaviors in organizational context (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2017; Porath and Pearson, 2012). Also, the relationship between individuals' normative reactions and organizational outcomes remains to be investigated in future research. Future research should consider examining the role of specific emotions to shed further light on employees' emotional reactions to workplace deviances in hierarchical relationships. For example, based on the present findings, future research could

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test the prediction that lower acceptability may lead to a sense of injustice and anger whereby lower job satisfaction, commitment and higher turnover intention are occurred in horizontal organizations. In contrast, in vertical organizations, decreased job satisfaction, commitment and increased turnover intention may be caused by the influence of deviant status on employees' self-efficacy, fear and frustration because it may be harder to escape or change a high-status deviant's behavior than a low-status deviant's behavior.

Finally, it would be interesting if future research would consider other factors that can impact on employee's turnover intention. For example, it would be interesting to consider the broader impact of personality and individual differences and their relationship to social context (i.e., organizational structure), as there is some evidence that employees' turnover intentions are associated with personality traits and job embeddedness (e.g., Albrecht and Marty, 2020; Hussain and Deery, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, employee mistreatment has been treated as an important topic in organizational research. Yet more evidence for this topic is still required to understand it fully because employee mistreatment is associated with various social and contextual factors. Thus, the present work focused on the impact that deviant status has different effects in different organizational structures regarding employee's deviant behaviors. Although, previous research has shown that negative organizational outcomes such as job dedication triggered by abusive supervision are associated with vertical organizational structures, not horizontal structures (e.g., Ayree *et al*., 2008), this work did not consider the dynamics of deviant status. Importantly, our present research expanded these findings by examining the role of organizational structure and deviant status on worker's reactions in response to deviant behaviors, by considering both directions of deviance (upward and downward). Furthermore, we revealed that subordinates' level of discomfort decreased due to the higher

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level of acceptability for their manager's deviant behaviors when they are working in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organizational structure. Thus, our findings contribute to the understanding of the psychology of employees in relation to employee mistreatment, by simultaneously considering the dynamics and effects of organizational structure and deviant status.

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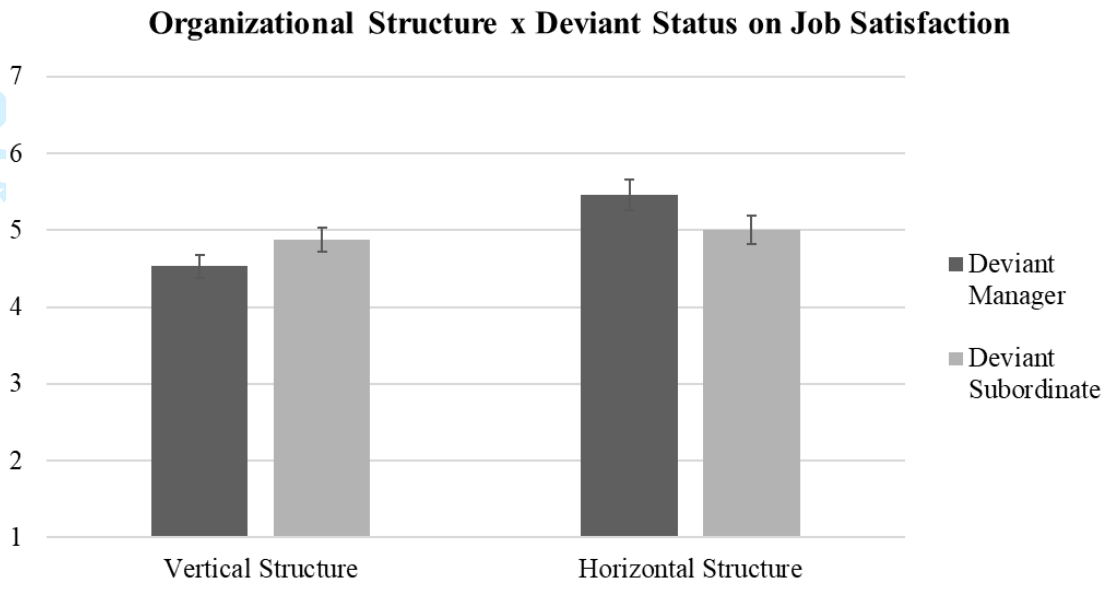


Figure 1. Organizational Structure x Deviant Status interaction for Job satisfaction (Study 2). Error bars represent standard error.

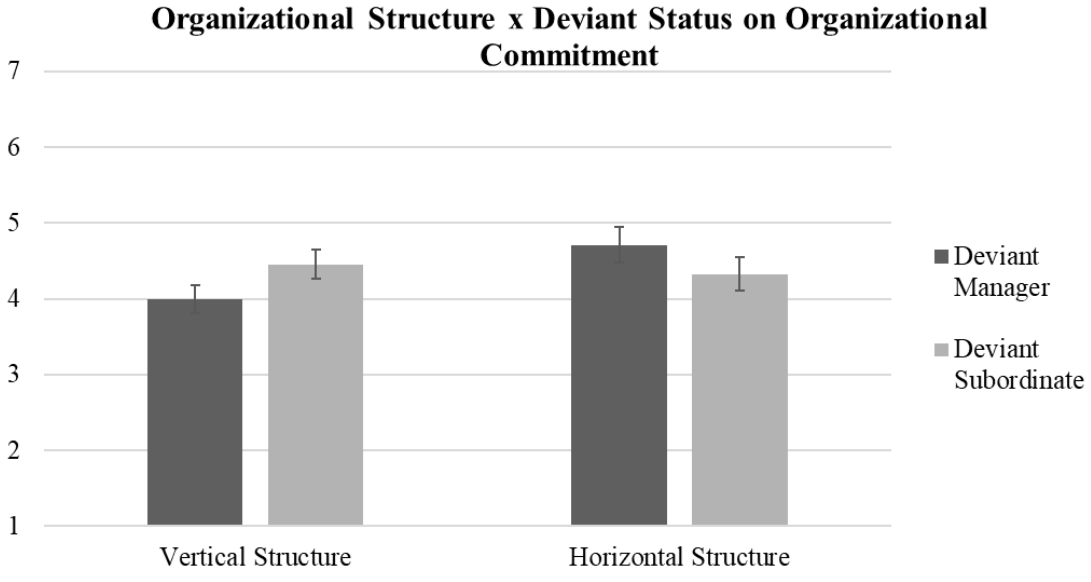


Figure 2. Organizational Structure x Deviant Status interaction for Organizational Commitment (Study 2). Error bars represent standard error.

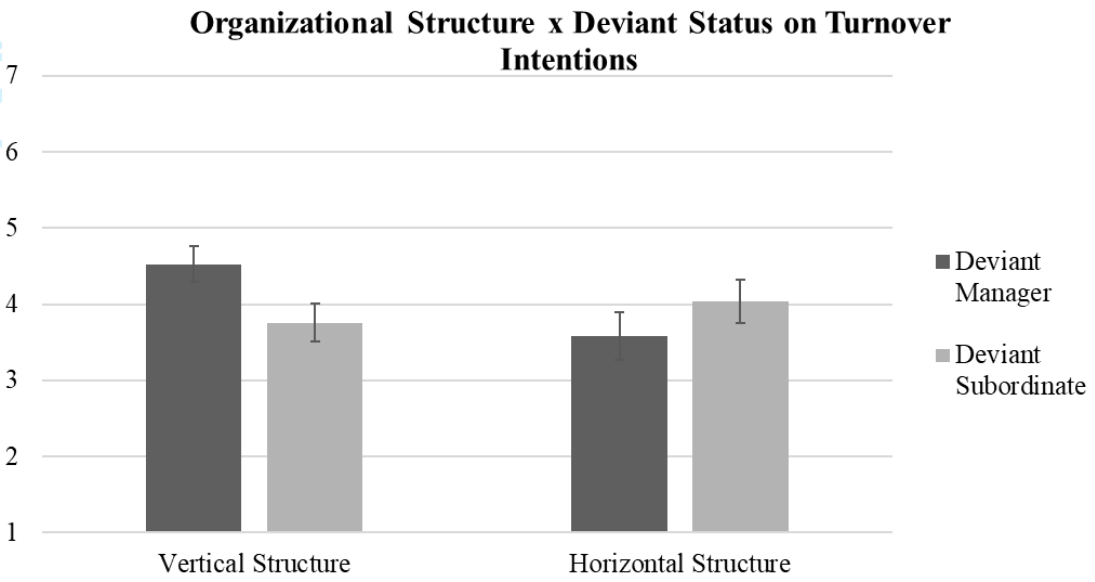


Figure 3. Organizational Structure x Deviant Status interaction for Turnover Intentions (Study 2). Error bars represent standard error.

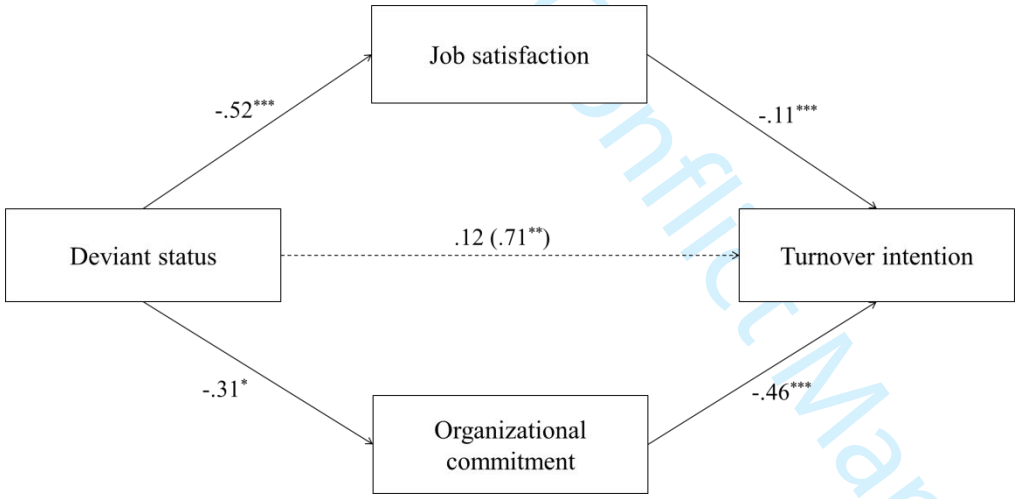


Figure 4. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mediators of the relationship between deviant status and turnover intention (Study 1). Total direct effect shown in parentheses.

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

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Figure 5. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as mediators of the relationship between organizational structure and turnover intention (Study 1). Total direct effect shown in parentheses.

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

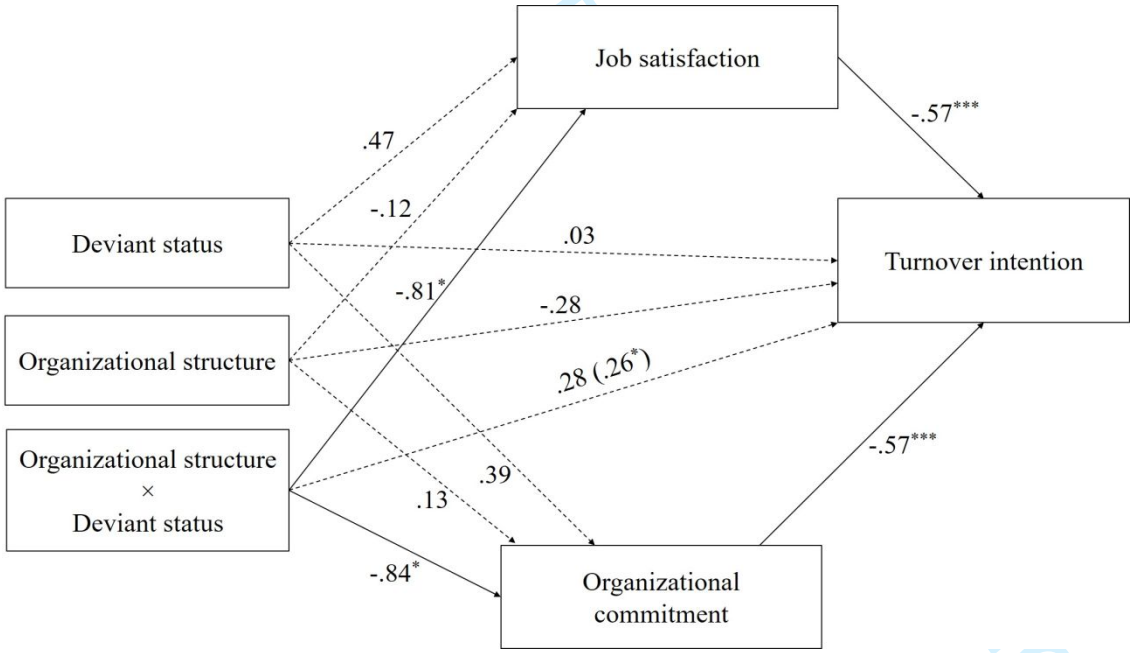


Figure 6. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment as mediators of the relationship between deviant status x organizational structure and discomfort caused by deviant behaviors (Study 2). Total direct effect shown in parentheses.

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

Table 1. *Summary of the Hypotheses in Studies 1 and 2, as well as the indication of whether they were supported or not.*

	Hypotheses	Supported in Study 1 (Yes/No)	Supported in Study 2 (Yes/No)
H1a	Workplace deviance displayed by managers will lead participants to experience more discomfort than workplace deviance displayed by a lower (subordinate) or equal (peer; Study 1 only) status deviant. [main effect of deviant status]	Yes	Yes
H1b	This effect will be stronger in horizontally structured organizations than in vertically structured organizations. [deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect]	No	No
H2a	Acceptability of deviant behavior from managers will be greater than from subordinates or peers (Study 1 only) [main effect of deviant status]	No	No
H2b	Workplace deviance will be judged as more acceptable in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organization structure condition associated with deviant status. [deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect]	No	No
H3a	Lower levels of job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and higher turnover intentions will be reported by participants in the vertical (vs. horizontal) organization structure. [main effect of organizational structure]	Yes	No
H3b	Lower levels of job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and higher turnover intentions will be reported by participants when the workplace deviant behavior is displayed by a manager (vs. subordinate or peer). [main effect of deviant status]	Yes	No
H4	A deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect is also expected in relation to workplace related outcomes, such that participants will report less job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and higher turnover intentions when the deviant is a manager, especially in the vertical structure compared to the horizontal structure. [deviant status x organizational structure interaction effect]	No	Yes
H5	Acceptability of deviant behavior will mediate the relationship between deviant status and discomfort, and this indirect path will be moderated by type of organizational structure. [Moderated mediation]	No	Yes
H6	Job satisfaction and organizational commitment will mediate the relationship between deviant status x organizational structure interaction and turnover intentions. [Moderated mediation]	No	Yes

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Table 2.

Intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations for study variables used in Study 1and 2

	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Study 1	1. Manipulation Check (OS)	—						
	2. Manipulation Check (DS)	-.01	—					
	3. Discomfort caused by deviant behavior	-.02	.19**	—				
	4. Acceptability of deviant behavior	.03	.18**	-.32**	—			
	5. Job satisfaction	-.47**	-.17**	-.08	-.02	—		
	6. Organizational commitment	-.46**	-.09	-.00	-.16*	.60**	—	
	7. Turnover intention	.48**	.17	.01	.15*	-.60**	-.66**	—
	M	4.21	4.02	5.56	2.06	4.86	4.45	3.99
	SD	2.20	1.63	1.42	1.26	1.21	1.30	1.76
Study 2	1. Manipulation Check (DS)	—						
	2. Perceived organizational structure	-.00	—					
	3. Discomfort caused by deviant behavior	.30**	.06	—				
	4. Acceptability of deviant behavior	.25**	-.04	-.18*	—			
	5. Job satisfaction	-.09	-.36**	.01	-.05	—		
	6. Organizational commitment	-.07	-.24**	.06	-.11	.60**	—	
	7. Turnover intention	.11	.23**	.06	.07	-.62**	-.66**	—
	M	4.24	4.60	5.52	2.30	4.90	4.33	4.03
	SD	1.96	1.45	1.41	1.34	1.24	1.47	1.90

Note. Manipulation Check (OS) = Organizational Structure; Manipulation Check (DS) = Deviant Status
**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

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Table 3.

Means (Standard Deviations) for the Dependent measures per condition (Study 1 and 2).

	Deviant Status	Organizational Structure	Discomfort	Acceptability	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment	Turnover Intention
Study 1	Manager	Vertical	5.86 (1.68)	1.96 (1.20)	3.74 (1.03)	3.70 (1.12)	5.16 (1.38)
		Horizontal	5.96 (1.02)	2.30 (1.53)	5.18 (1.10)	4.74 (1.44)	3.83 (1.45)
		Total	5.91 (1.37)	2.14 (1.38)	4.49 (1.28)	4.24 (1.39)	4.47 (1.73)
	Peer	Vertical	5.46 (1.63)	2.01 (1.19)	4.38 (1.22)	3.90 (1.25)	4.62 (1.52)
		Horizontal	5.31 (1.22)	2.25 (1.17)	5.65 (0.69)	5.11 (1.11)	2.70 (1.45)
		Total	5.39 (1.45)	2.12 (1.18)	4.96 (1.19)	4.45 (1.33)	3.75 (1.76)
	Subordinate	Vertical	5.18 (1.45)	1.97 (1.34)	4.64 (1.07)	4.18 (1.08)	4.38 (1.50)
		Horizontal	5.54 (1.33)	1.89 (1.07)	5.57 (0.84)	5.10 (1.07)	3.17 (1.70)
		Total	5.37 (1.39)	1.93 (1.20)	5.12 (1.07)	4.65 (1.16)	3.76 (1.70)
	Total	Vertical	5.50 (1.61)	1.98 (1.24)	4.26 (1.17)	3.93 (1.17)	4.71 (1.50)
		Horizontal	5.61 (1.22)	2.14 (1.28)	5.46 (0.92)	4.98 (1.22)	3.26 (1.71)
		Total	5.56 (1.42)	2.06 (1.26)	4.85 (1.21)	4.45 (1.30)	3.99 (1.76)
Study 2	Manager	Vertical	6.13 (0.87)	2.35 (1.32)	4.53 (1.18)	4.00 (1.43)	4.52 (1.91)
		Horizontal	5.57 (1.28)	2.50 (1.46)	5.47 (1.18)	4.71 (1.61)	3.58 (1.77)
		Total	5.92 (1.07)	2.41 (1.37)	4.88 (1.26)	4.26 (1.53)	4.18 (1.90)
	Subordinate	Vertical	5.16 (1.17)	1.88 (1.07)	4.88 (1.29)	4.46 (1.56)	3.75 (1.99)
		Horizontal	5.07 (1.84)	2.60 (1.47)	5.00 (1.23)	4.33 (1.19)	4.04 (1.77)
		Total	5.11 (1.58)	2.19 (1.30)	4.93 (1.22)	4.40 (1.41)	3.88 (1.89)
	Total	Vertical	5.35 (1.23)	2.13 (1.23)	4.70 (1.24)	4.22 (1.51)	4.16 (1.98)
		Horizontal	5.63 (1.51)	2.55 (1.46)	5.22 (1.17)	4.50 (1.41)	3.73 (1.77)
		Total	5.52 (1.41)	2.30 (1.34)	4.90 (1.23)	4.33 (1.47)	4.03 (1.90)

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