



## Deviant Behaviors in Response to Organizational Injustice: Mediator Test for Psychological Contract Breach—The Case of Tunisia

Houda Zribi, University of Tunis, Tunisia  
Saloua Souaï, University of Kairouan, Tunisia

### Abstract

*Although there is abundant literature on the adoption of deviant behaviour by workers in response to a perceived organisational injustice, little research has attempted to examine the factors that might intervene in the explanation of this relationship. This article's central stake to show that the explanation of workers' behaviour cannot be done without a multi-level analysis, accounting for the complexity of the human and organisational systems. The apprehension of deviant behaviour is henceforth done by combining organisational and individual factors. Based on the social exchange theory, this work aims at exploring the relationship between the injustice and the deviance through a psychological contract approach (mediating variable). In this work, we lay open the main results of a research combining two approaches: qualitative (based on a set of exploratory interviews of 12 Tunisian employees) and quantitative (conducted in two steps, exploratory and confirmatory using the structural equations model). The results of a survey of 340 Tunisian managers reveal the existence of significant relationships in accordance with the formulated hypotheses.*

**Keywords:** Organisational injustice, deviant behaviour, psychological contract, social exchange theory.

### Introduction

Every organisation, as uninterested as it might be, is worried about knowing if it helps realising what is fair and eliminating what is unfair (Morris and Leung, 2000). In fact, the organisational world and in particular the social relationships that are created there are based on the justice values. These values, whether implicit or explicit, will define the rules of action that inspire judgements and behaviour. Not the merest human interaction escapes these rules in a way or another. Greenberg (1995, p.2) says in this respect that « to understand the human nature and the social interactions, few concepts are as fundamental as that of justice ». It is in this way that all events and all practices in an organisation are « more or less marked by a judgement of justice » (EL Akremi 2006, p.21). Although complex and often utopic, much researches defend the idea that organizational justice is powerful enough to direct most of our behaviour at work. Since then, research in management has tackled the analysis of the justice's central role in the comprehension of different organisational realities such as the

reactions to the performance evaluation systems (Greenberg, 1986 ; Erdogan, 2002), the organisational citizenship behaviour (Farh and al., 1990 ; Niehoff and Moorman, 1993 ; Tepper and al., 2001), the organisational commitment (Colquitt and al., 2001 ; Masterson and al., 2000 ; Simons and Roberson, 2003), the development of interpersonal confidence (Brockner and Siegel, 1996) and the development of deviant behaviour at work (Aquino and al., 1999 ; Colquitt and al., 2001 and Le Roy, 2010).

The aim of this article is therefore to feed theoretical reflexion on the use of the injustice at work as a contextual variable explaining the development of deviant behaviour. Such a research seems innovative insofar as it challenges the presumption of the primacy of the analyses of positive and proactive behaviour at work. In fact, the literature contains many examples showing that companies cannot carry their activities while neglecting dysfunctional and deviant behaviour at work. In this respect, Vardi and Wiener (1992) have sustained that ignoring and neglecting deviance at work will only increase the scope of this problem. In their meta-analysis, Colquitt and al. (2001) advocate the necessity of conducting profound research in order to prevent the proliferation of the deviance at the workplace using the organisational injustice as an explicative variable. Robinson and Bennett (1995) have shown that the deviance at work often represents a phenomenon that is more submitted than used by the organisation. However, if the organisation succeeds in identifying and understanding the reasons pushing employees to develop deviant behaviour, it will be able to manage its bad consequences (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Thus, in order to contain the situations favourable to the development of deviance, it is important to identify the mechanisms leading to such behaviour. Therefore, we take an interest in thinking about what can trigger and cause deviance. A study of the literature allowed us to show that the organisational injustice comes out as the main factor explaining deviant behaviour at work.

Nevertheless, despite the consensus that seems to be built around the importance of explaining the deviance at work using the organisational injustice (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997; Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield, 1999; Fox, Spector and Miles, 2001), the research devoted to it remains heterogeneous as for explaining the mechanisms and processes articulating this relationship. Put differently, it is about understanding how the perception of the injustice influences the development of deviant behaviour at work. Different works on the topic support the idea that the two concepts are not linear and that other variables can intervene in order to better explain the links that might exist between the injustice and the deviance. Moreover, many researchers (Masterson and al., 2000; Colquitt and al., 2001; Aryee and al., 2002; Ambrose and Schminck, 2003; EL Akremi and al., 2006) show the limits of the studies establishing a direct relationship between the organisational injustice and the attitudes and/or behaviour at work, insofar as they allow to reconstitute only a small part of the two concepts variance and hence represent incomplete versions of the justice at the work process. (El Akremi and al., 2006).

Since then, there has been a growing need in academic research to understand the mechanisms and processes by which the organisational injustice and the deviance at work transit, by integrating moderating and mediating variables (Aquino and al., 1999; Aryee and al., 2002; Le Roy, 2010; El Akremi and al., 2006). **It is in this perspective that we aspire to enrich the understanding of the link between organisational injustice and deviance by integrating the break of the psychological contract as a mediating variable.** Thus, we present an integrating model combining in a creative way the organisational and psychological factors that are able to intervene in the relationship between the perceived injustice and the development of deviant behaviour. This integration effort is largely based on a deconstruction and a critical reading of the theoretical corpus as well as the results of exploratory interviews reflecting the survey context specificities. This article is subdivided

into four parts: first, we position the research model by a brief presentation of the studied concepts; second, we argue the different links between the retained variables; third, we present the study methodology and results and finally we discuss the results, present further research tracks and propound managerial implications.

## **1. Theoretical positioning of the research**

It is simplistic trying to explain and understand workers' behaviour without alleging the organisational context where this behaviour occurs. Through this article, we aspire showing that if it is true that an organisation's raw material is made of the way actors behave, it is not less true that these latter are largely conditioned by the organisation's formal and informal structures. As a contextual variable, the organisational injustice can thus postulate explanations regarding workers' undertaking of deviant behaviour at work.

### **1.1. Organisational justice as an explanatory frame and motivating basis of behaviour at work**

Justice emerges in many discourses and is at the crossroads of many disciplines (Folger and Kass, 2000 ; Gilliland and Steiner, 2001). In each field, it plays a role and obeys specific logics. Initially studied in philosophy as being « *the first virtue of social institutions* » (Rawls, 1971, p. 29), justice is popular in managerial literature since nearly four decades. In fact, unlike the normative orientation of earlier research, thinking about justice at work is built around its central role in the formation of judgements that control a great part of the attitudes and behaviour of the people in interaction. In this way, the justice goes from a universal principle to an analysis chart, a heuristics that helps a better understanding and a prediction of every person, a 'managerial practice', a governance, a guide thanks to which the manager coordinates his activities and which does not allow him to be lost in the endless knowledge query (Beugré, 1996). The organisational justice is valuable as long as it is useful. It is synallagmatic : it is reality and ideality (Proudhon, 1860) and it is precisely this real aspect (rational and logical) that allows it to go beyond the mere role of setting laws and rules of behaviour for a new and always legitimate management mode (Brockner, 2002 ; Blader and Tyler, 2005). Having said that, the organisational justice constitutes a social control system ensuring harmony within groups (Cropanzano and Kacmar, 1995). In this regard, Brockner (2006, p. 125) says precisely that «*by using fair processes, organisations spend less money and will have more satisfied employees* ».

Used often as a means by which people give a meaning to their social environment and invoked to describe and organise socio-economic relationships and interactions, the justice directly displays a variety of representations and takes therefore different names, according to the faculties that it addresses. It is often defined in terms of dimensions (distributive, procedural, interactional). According to this perspective, the justice is defined as « *the **perception** of the fairness of the exchanges that occur in the organisation, be them economic or social, involving the individual in his relationships with superiors, subordinates, colleagues and the organisation as a social system* » Beugré, (1998, p.7). Evaluating justice at work refers thus « *to the employees' perceptions regarding three ubiquitous considerations at work : (1) the remuneration remitted by the organization (distributive justice), (2) the way decisions are executed and implemented by formal instances (procedural justice) as well as (3) the quality of interpersonal treatment received from the superior who transmits the decisions at work (interactional justice)*» (Le Roy, 2010, p. 13). As a matter of fact, a consensus seems to be built around the necessity of considering simultaneously the three

dimensions of the justice to reconstitute all its richness and complexity (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, and Rupp, 2001; Li and Cropanzano, 2009).

## **1.2. Deviance at work : A bidimensional conception**

Being a common phenomenon, the deviance has become one of the central concepts in both theoretical and empirical analyses (Thau and al., 2009; Ferris and al., 2009). This theme has raised many debates and has been considered according to different points of view. As far as this work is concerned, the deviance will be considered from a managerial perspective, because of its exorbitant cost when it comes to the deviance toward the organisation and in the light of the well-being at work in the case of interpersonal deviance. The deviance at work is thus defined as « *behaviour going voluntarily and intentionally opposite the norms set by the organisation and threatening its well-being and/or that of its members* » (Robinson and Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Three essential principles characterising deviance can be deduced from this definition. Firstly, we consider deviant behaviour at work every negative comportment that is likely to damage systematically the organisation (Bennett and Robinson, 1995; Anderson and Pearson, 1999). Secondly, these comportments have to be consciously produced, not accidental and unintentional. In other words, the individual will act consciously and voluntarily against the organisation by violating its ethical rules. Thirdly, these comportments can be addressed to the organisation directly (sabotage) or indirectly (verbal, physical or moral violence; sexual harassment) (Bennett and Robinson, 1995, Anderson and Pearsons, 1999).

Despite the few critics concerning Bennett and Robinson's definition (1995, 2000) described as narrow by certain authors (Gruys and Sackett, 2003), this definition is still a reference at the conceptual as well as the empirical levels thanks to its capacity of identifying adverse behaviour and outpacing earlier works based only on the study of some comportments, namely theft, power abuse and absenteeism. By doing so, the works of Bennett and Robinson (1995, 2000, 2004) allowed to theorise and especially to measure the deviance at work by offering a theoretical basis and scales of measure tested and validated by most researchers (Berry and al., 2007; Le Roy, 2008).

## **1.3. Integration of the psychological contract to better understand the relationship injustice/deviance: the social exchange theory as a theoretical support**

The psychological contract approach, while explaining the exchange dynamism that is woven between the employee and his organisation about the interpretation of the formal and informal conditions of the work relationship (Rousseau, 2001), seems to be at the effigy of numerous organisational phenomena (such as trust, injustice, commitment) insofar as it permits to take into consideration the qualitative and symbolic measures at work (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2005 ; Rousseau, 2001 ; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Having said that, a perceived injustice affects directly the employee's exchange theory with the organisation by creating a gap between the promises and the really obtained compensation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Kickul, 2001). The psychological contract break « *relative to the cognition that the organisation has failed in realising one or more obligations part of the psychological contract in a commensurable way with its contributions* » (Morrison and Robinson, 1997, p. 230), is often recurrent as a consequence of the injustice at work (Kickul, 2001 ; Kickuk and Lester, 2001 ; Kickul and al., 2002) and as an explanatory variable of the different negative behaviour namely deviant behaviour (Lester and al., 2002 ; Turnley and al., 2004 ; Rousseau 1994 ; Robinson and Morrison 1995, 2000 ; Turnley and Feldman, 1999). These findings

give more reliability to the choice of the psychological contract break as a mediating variable between the organisational injustice and the deviance insofar as it meets Baron and Kenny's conditions (1986) concerning the justification of the mediation relationship.

In fact, the psychological contract break would potentially explain in a concrete and an original way the relationship between the perception of the injustice and the development of deviant behaviour at work insofar as the very evaluation of the injustice explicitly incorporates the quality of the relationship that the employee establishes with his organisation. In this regard, Smithson and Lewis., (2000) show that understanding the justice evaluation process, concerning the distributions, the procedures or even the interpersonal treatments, cannot be carried out without an analysis of the implicit agreements concerning the respective expectations of the employee and his organisation, which are no other than the psychological contract. Campoy and Neveu (2006) confirm this idea and maintain that the evaluation of the remunerations fairness cannot do without taking into consideration the exchange dynamism between the employee and his organisation. To be able to have a say on fairness at work, we must first understand the reciprocal expectations and obligations for both sides. In this regard, the merit payment can only be comprised in a work context based on competence logic. Applied in a classic context where the equality between contribution/payment is the only prevailing rule and where work stability outweighs competence and loyalty outstands performance, the merit payment will be judged as a totally unjust policy.

However, the social exchange theory provides a relevant theoretical framework that justifies the importance of integrating the psychological contract break in the research model. This theory was raised by many researchers in order to explain the motivational bases of workers' attitudes and behaviour (Masterson and al., 2000; Cropanzano, Prehar, and Chen, 2002; Moorman and Byrne, 2005). More particularly, it was suggested to integrate the social exchange context to produce a more complete image of the workers' attitudes and behaviour explanatory mechanisms (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994; Rupp and Cropanzano, 2002; Nasr, 2009). The social exchange- defined as « *the individuals' voluntary deeds motivated by the returns that these deeds are supposed to bring and which they actually bring from others* » (Blau, 1964, p. 92)- has served, in many works of research, as a mediating variable that is able to explain the effect of the injustice on the behaviour and the attitudes at work (Moorman, Blakely and Niehoff, 1998 ; Masterson and al., 2000 ; Rupp Cropanzano, 2002 ; Aryee and al., 2002 ; Lavelle and al., 2007 ; Nasr and al., 2009). In fact, the exchange theory is essentially based on the reciprocity and balance principles stated by Gouldner (1960). The individual looks for a certain balance in his relationship with others; which makes him condition the realisation of his obligations towards the organisation by the behaviour of this latter towards his own obligations. Besides, a fair treatment is supposed to breed a high quality exchange relationship (essentially represented by the psychological contract upholding), which, thanks to the reciprocity norm, should motivate positive and functional attitudes and behaviour from the employee towards the target exchange partner (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001).

## **2. Research model and hypotheses**

Based essentially on the social exchange theory, we were able to elaborate a conceptual model linking the organisational injustice in its tri-dimensional version (distributive, procedural and interactional) and the deviance at work with its two components (organisational and interpersonal) through the psychological contract break (relational and transactional).

The employee seeks for a continuing evaluation of his exchange relationships with the organisation in general, his hierarchical superiors and his collaborators, and thus his psychological contract. Now, according to the social exchange logic, two exchange types are identified: economic exchange and social exchange (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Prehar 2000; Rousseau, 1995; Shore and Tetrcich, 1994). This precision is important for the different variables modelisations augmentation.

Indeed, much research shows a strong positive link between the perception of a distributive injustice and the perception of a psychological contract break (Turnley and Feldman, 1999; Kickul, 2001; Tickul and al., 2002; Cropanzano et Prehar, 2001). However, the relationship between the distributive injustice and the transactional psychological contract was not explicitly examined. This can be explained by the fact that actual research conceives the psychological contract as a unidimensional concept. Only the works of Cropazano and Prehar (2001) analysed this relationship. This research results consider that the distributive injustice represents an antecedent of the perception of the transactional psychological contract break (Kickul and al., 2002).

***H1:** The distributive injustice has a positive effect on the transactional psychological contract break*

Furthermore, the individual at work does not only worry about the content of the decisions as such (salary) but also gives a big importance to the way these latter were taken. In this regard, Thibaut and Walker (1975) determine two procedural justice analysis phases. The first consists in controlling the allocation process and allows the employees to control the way the decision will be put into practice. This phase allows the employee to act on the remunerations, to correct and adjust his contributions according to the remunerations given (Colquitt and al., 2001). The second phase is linked to the control of the decision itself. In this respect, when there are no fair procedures, the employees will be incapable of negotiating their psychological contracts, which, in turn, triggers a transactional psychological contract break. Many studies have shown that the right of expression improves the acceptance of the decision results even if they are disadvantageous (Lind and al., 1980). Fair procedures represent therefore a guarantee used by workers before committing themselves into an economic exchange relationship (Leventhal and al., 1976).

***H2:** The procedural injustice has a positive influence on the transactional psychological contract break*

However, while the procedural injustice was first interpreted through an economic vision, the works of Leventhal (1976) and those of Tyler and Lind (1992) allowed widening this component's implementation scope. Since then, the procedural injustice is used as an evaluation indicator of the quality of the relationship that the employee has with the group and the authority. Lind and Tyler (1992) have proposed a highly interesting model to explain the relationships between the organisational injustice and the relational psychological contract break. This model is based on the relational identity. The authors suppose that the individuals resort to procedures to estimate the value given to them by the group, the organisation or the authority using these procedures. Therefore, in social exchange logic, the individual exchanges with the organisation and its members not only economic assets but also socio-emotional ones. Thus, the procedural justice allows checking the principle of socio-emotional exchange reciprocity. In their study, Van Prooijen and al., (2004) have shown that the individuals are interested by the procedural justice because they fear social exclusion. In fact, the employee engages physically and psychologically in long term exchange relationships without guarantee, having fair procedures as mere insurance (Tekleab and al., 2005). The

absence of clear and fair procedures is likely to reinforce the uncertainty that is inherent to the exchange relationship.

**H3:** *The procedural injustice has a positive effect on the relational psychological contract break*

Besides, many works emphasise that the interactional injustice leads the employees to go over and review their psychological contract (Cropanzano and Prehar, 2001, Tekleab and al., 2005). Whether the decision is advantageous or not, (distributive justice, procedural justice), the employees evaluate continually the quality of the interpersonal treatment. The perception of an interactional injustice develops a feeling of belittlement and degradation (Cropanzano and Prehar, 2001) which demotivates the individuals and prevents them from engaging in long term exchange relationships with their organisation (Cobb and al., 1995). The interactional justice is part of the social exchange frame that rules the relationship of the individual with his organisation. As a matter of fact, the organisation is generally represented by direct and indirect hierarchical superiors (Tekleab and Taylor, 2003, Guest and Conway, 2000). Thus, the relationship that the employee has with his hierarchical superiors reflects the degree of importance given to him by the organisation. Shore and Tetrick (1994) assert that the hierarchical superiors play an important role in the creation of the psychological contract. In this way, every injustice that affects the interpersonal relationships quality is able to lead to a relational psychological contract break. Based on all these arguments, we put forward the following hypotheses:

**H4:** *The interactional injustice has a positive effect on the relational psychological contract break*

The effect of the transactional psychological contract break concerns only deviant behaviour towards the organisation (Hörshcovis and al., 2007). The works of Chiu and Peng (2008) confirm this thesis. The authors claim that the explanatory power of the psychological contract break is more important for the organisational deviance than the interpersonal one. Following this same logic, Lee and Allen (2002) as well as Robinson and Bennett (1995) show that the organisational variables such as the organisational justice and the psychological contract have an influence on the organisational dimension of the deviance at work. Based on the social exchange theory, the response to the non realisation of the economic obligations (salary, promotion) that refer to the transactional psychological contract should be interpreted by a decrease in the level of realisation of the likewise elements from an economic exchange perspective (Blau, 1964). In other words, after a perception of non respect of economic obligations and in order to reestablish a balance situation, the employee will engage in negative compartments such as unjustified absenteeism, theft, sabotage ...etc. In this regard and based on the negative fairness norm, Gouldner (1960) and Rousseau and al., (1993) have shown that a flaw in the transactional psychological contract leads to a decrease in the workers' feeling of obligation towards the organisation (Dulac, 2005).

**H5:** *The transactional psychological contract break affects positively the development of deviant behaviour towards the organization*

In addition, the consequences of the perception of a flaw in the relational psychological contract on the compartments are more significant than those of the transactional contract (Felson, 1982). This can be explained by the nature of the assets exchanged in the social relationship between the organisation and the employee. The relational psychological contract is an implicit long term contract, including relational obligations such as gratitude, loyalty, identification, trust, respect and courtesy. Thereupon, a

flaw of the relational contract is able to taint the individual's dignity (Bies and Tripp, 1998). Therefore, if a transactional psychological contract break leads to a feeling of wrath, which in turn makes the individuals adopt deviant behaviour, the relational psychological contract break leads to strong emotional reactions such as frustration, sadness and stress; all this triggers violent actions towards the organisation (Chen and Spector, 1992; Fox and al., 2001). Kickul (2001) has conducted an empirical survey on 322 employees. This analysis points up the relationship between the relational psychological contract break and deviant behaviour towards the organisation. The author considers that an infringement of the social norms, a promises failure or a disrespectful treatment bring about violent behaviour that harms the organisation in general.

***H6:** The relational psychological contract break influences positively the development of deviant behaviour towards the organisation*

Besides, the literature has shown that the relationship of the relational psychological contract break and the interpersonal deviance were not subject to profound study. This can be explained by the fact that the responsibility of the psychological contract break is generally blamed on the organisation (Bordia and al., 2008). Nevertheless, another stream of research questions the hypothesis according to which the hierarchical superiors are organisational representatives. Guest and Conway (2000) show from an empirical analysis that the employees do not judge the organisation through the hierarchical superiors and that the fact of controlling the employees under the exchange relationship is part of the hierarchical superior's mission not that of the organisation (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Based on these comments, Chui and Penk (2008) have shown that all interpersonal attack affecting the individual dignity and identity, namely public criticism, accusations, moral or physical harassment and insult trigger interpersonal deviant behaviour. Following the example of Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall (2005), we recognise that the hierarchical superiors can intervene in the key decisions concerning the exchange relationships. Yet, the way the obligations relative to the functions' specific aspects (flexibility, autonomy, empowerment) as well as the control degree are communicated is the task of the hierarchical superiors and not that of the organisation in general. In this regard, the employees will engage in interpersonal deviant behaviour (Berkowitz, 1969). Following these arguments, we come up with the following hypotheses:

***H7:** The relational psychological contract break has a positive effect on the development of interpersonal deviant behaviour*

Moreover, according to these arguments and with reference to the works of Baron and Kenny (1986) relative to the definition of the necessary conditions for a variable to be qualified of mediating, we can put forward four hypotheses summarizing the eventual mediation role of the psychological contract break in the organisational injustice and the deviance at work relationship:

***H 8:** The relational psychological contract break plays a mediating role in the relationship between the interactional injustice and the interpersonal deviance*

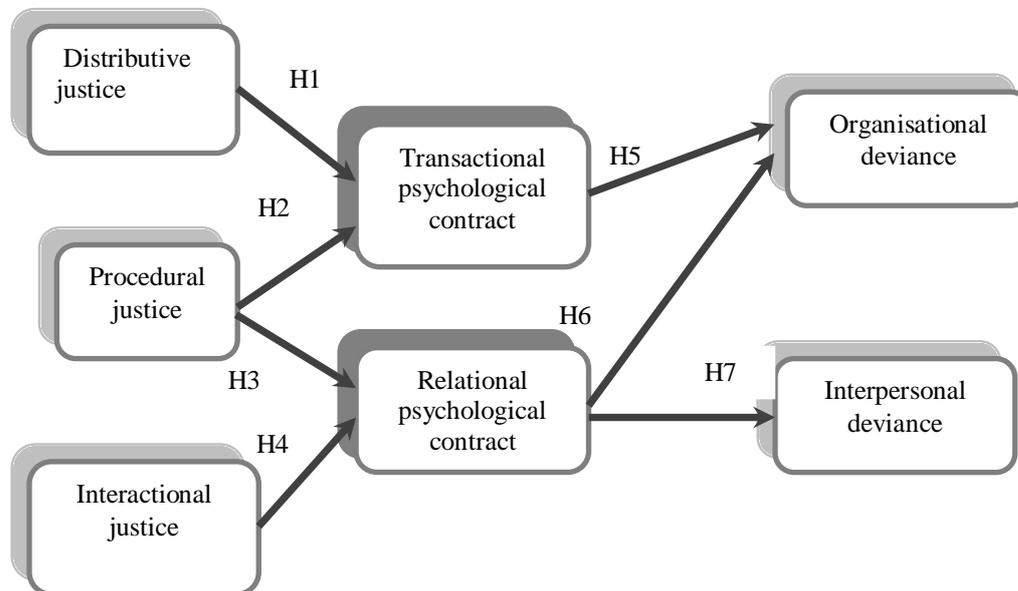
***H 9:** The transactional psychological contract break plays a mediating role in the relationship between procedural injustice and organisational deviance*

***H 10:** The transactional psychological contract break plays a mediating role in the relationship between the distributive injustice and organisational deviance*

***H 11:** The relational psychological contract break plays a mediating role in the relationship between the interpersonal deviance and the distributive injustice*

The final conceptual model of our research as well as the different links between the retained variables are presented in the following figure:

**Figure 1: Research conceptual model**



### 3. Methodology and analyses

To put to the proof the conceptual model and test the above formulated hypotheses, we have opted for a methodological process combining two approaches: a qualitative exploratory approach and a quantitative approach. The operationalisation of the constructs studied in this research is essentially based on a poll by questionnaire. Yet, the hypotheses formulation, the sample choice and the questionnaire conception were preceded by a qualitative phase in the form of exploratory interviews of twelve Tunisian managers belonging to the firms in question. This triangulation has allowed us to refine and stabilise the conceptual model. The present section's objective is to describe the sample of our quantitative poll, to present the measure scales we used and the different analyses carried out on the data collected.

#### 3.1. Sample

The poll was conducted on four firms that belong to the private sector and that have a big size. This choice was led by many considerations. First, the perception of the psychological contract is more significant in the private firms. The majority of the empirical studies about the psychological contract, and namely the psychological contract break, were realised in the private sector (Robinson et Rousseau, 1994; Kickul et al., 2002; Turnley et al., 2000; Campoy, 2004). Then, the firms chosen have a big size employing a big number of employees in order to increase the number of individuals in our sample. We have opted for a sample of Tunisian managers as a target of our empirical study. This population, which is not at the summit of the hierarchy, also represents a convenient field of study to analyse the superiors' practices and evaluate their degree of fairness. However, according to the managers' statute and academic level, they are able to develop more expectations at the transactional as well as the relational level than other employees; which seems to provide a favourable field to the contract break and to increase the importance of the organisational

justice considerations. The questionnaire was administered to 500 employees. After many relaunches, 372 were recovered, that is to say a return rate of 74.40%. On these 372 recovered questionnaires, 340 were exploitable, 32 were excluded because they contained a lot of missing information. The rate of exploitable answers is 68%. The sample is made up of 61.76% men and 38.24% women. More than 49% of the respondents have an academic level of a bachelor plus two, and more than 50% have a bachelor plus four or more. More than 70% of the workers have a work experience that exceeds five years.

### **3.2. Scales of measure**

The distributed questionnaire was built according to the scales of measure existing in the earlier research. These scales were translated from English to French using the '*back translation*' method (Vallerand, 1989). The established questionnaire includes 75 items measured by a 5- point Likert scale going from « *I do not agree at all* » to « *I agree totally* ». To ensure the clarity of the items, the questionnaire was pre-tested by twelve managers. There was no determined comprehension difficulty. The conducted pre-test has enabled some minor adaptations to the initial scales. The distributive justice was measured by the Price and Mueller scale (1986). As for the procedural dimension, it was measured by the Lamertz scale (2002) and we opted for the Niehoff and Moorman scale (1993) for the interactional justice. The psychological contract break was measured by the Kickul scale (2001). As for the dependant variable, which is the deviance at work, the scale chosen is that of Bennett and Robinson (2000). The choice of the scales of measure was made respecting a certain number of criteria (the scale theoretical under-structure, each scale items' clarity of formulation, the scale psychometric qualities, the scale popularity, the scale length and the scale adaptation capacity).

### **3.3. Data analysis and results**

The recovered data have undergone two types of analysis. In a first step, factorial exploratory analyses (under SPSS 18) and confirmatory analyses (under Amos 16) were conducted to evaluate the dimensionality, the reliability and the validity of the constructs. Secondly, the structural equation methods under Amos 18 were applied to test the relationships between the variables of the conceptual model. These two steps as well as their results will be presented in what follows.

#### **3.3.1. Factorial analysis**

The results of the exploratory analysis are very satisfactory. The Analysis in Principal Components (APC) with Varimax rotation has allowed finding the same conceptual dimensions of the justice, the psychological contract, the deviance as well as the amiability. Some items were eliminated. They were those with factorial contributions or those whose contributions are shared between many axes (Hair and al. 1998). The majority of the retained items have factorial contributions superior to 0.7. The reliability and the internal coherence of the items that make one dimension were evaluated by the Cronbach alpha coefficient. With the exception of the psychological contract break, all the other variables have Cronbach alpha coefficients superior to 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The below table summarises the number of the retained items after the factorial analyses as well as the reliability of the scales of measure.

**Table 1:** Results of the factorial analyses and the reliability for the different scales of measure

Variables	Organisational justice			Psychological contract		Deviance at work		Amiability
	Dis jus	Pro jus	Int jus	Trans pc	Rela pc	Org dev	Inte dev	Amiability
Number of Retained items	4	6	9	14	9	12	6	9
Standardised alpha Obtained	0.921	0.910	0.957	0.961	0.966	0.970	0.976	0.963
Average alpha (litterature)	0.94	0.899	0.935	0.832	0.812	0.976	0.970	0.924

In a second phase, a confirmatory factorial analysis was realised under Amos 16 to test the discriminant and convergent validities of the constructs and to attest the psychometric quality of the exploratory phase results. The factorial confirmatory analysis realised has led to the elimination of certain items which were excluded from the analysis due to their weak factorial contributions. These items also show some strong variances of the measures mistakes and a very weak percentage of the explained variance. Table 2 summarises the adjustment indexes which can be considered good, seen the model complexity and the relatively weak size of the sample (Roussel and al., 2002).

**Table 2:** Adjustment indexes of the measure model

Absolute indexes		Incremental indexes			Parsimony indexes	
$\chi^2$	RMSEA	GFI	TLI	CFI	$\chi^2/ddl$	AIC
2162.250	0.100	0.913	0.859	0.884	4.404	2440.250 < 15016.386 (independent model))

The GFI is of 0.913 which is superior to the recommended threshold of 0.9. The RMSEA is of 0.1. This result is excellent as it is inferior to the threshold limit of 0.08. The TLI and the CFI are respectively of 0.859 and 0.884 which are values under the most commonly used norm, that is to say 0.9, this is due to the existence of a colinearity between certain variables of the model. In fact, these indexes measure the adjustment amelioration by comparing our model to a more restrictive one in which all the observed variables would be non correlated (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). The normed chi square is of 4.404. This index is comprised in the recommended acceptance interval (between 1 and 5), which brings support to the quality of good adjustment of our research model.

### 3.3.2. Test of the research hypotheses: the structural model

The structural coefficients relative to the structural model are presented in the below table. These coefficients show the significance of the relationships between the different variables of the model.

**Table 3:** The structural coefficients of the research model

Independent variables	Dependent variables	$\lambda_i$	T Test (C.R)	P
Distributive justice	Transactional psychological contract	0.166	3.102	0.002
Procedural justice	Transactional psychological contract	0.613	10.359	***
Procedural justice	Relational psychological contract	0.020	0.391	0.696
Interactional justice	Relational psychological contract	0.302	5.127	***
Transactional psychological contract	Organisational deviance	0.410	7.117	***
Relational psychological contract	Organisational justice	0.002	0.060	0.952
Relational psychological contract	Interpersonal deviance	0.309	3.209	0.001

Seen the obtained results, it is possible to conclude that the majority of the links between our model variables are significant. This observation reinforces the theoretical and practical contribution of the conceptual model and allows us to test the mediating effect of the psychological contract break as well as the moderating effect of the amiability. More particularly, we can affirm that the hypothesis according to which the transactional psychological contract break mediates the relationship between the perception of a distributive injustice and the development of interpersonal deviant behaviour is already refuted insofar as the theoretically expected link between the distributive organisational injustice and the interpersonal deviance is not significant. In what follows, we will focus on studying the effect of mediation of the psychological contract break in the relationship between the procedural injustice and the organisational deviance on the one hand, and between the interactional injustice and the interpersonal deviance on the other. Furthermore, the mediating role of the relationship between the distributive injustice and the organisational deviance will be studied.

The test of the mediating role of the psychological contract break was conducted according to the interactive process proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986).

**Table 4:** Test results of the effects of the psychological contract break in the injustice/deviance relationship

First condition	$\Lambda$	Test T (C.R)	Relationship significance threshold
Inter injus/ interpersonal deviance	0.482	16.706	***
Proced injus/ organisational deviance	0.323	14.006	***
Distr injus / organisational deviance	0.511	23.768	***
<b>Second condition</b>			
Interac injus/ relational pcb	0.315	5.239	***
Procedu injus/ transactional pcb	0.601	5.987	***
<b>Third condition</b>			
Injus interactio/ relational pcb	0.365	5.663	***
Interac injus/Interpersonal deviance	0.241	2.872	***
Relational pcb / interpersonal deviance	0.341	5.610	***
Proce injus/ transactional pcb	0.691	7.842	***
Pro injus / organisat deviance	0.299	3.557	***
Trans pcb / organisatio deviance	0.460	7.721	***
<b>Fourth step</b>	<b>Link without the mediating variable(a)</b>	<b>Link with introduction of the mediating variable(b)</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
			a > b and b different

Proced injust/organisational deviance	0.323	0.299	from 0 The mediation is partial
Intera injust/ interpersonal deviance	0.482	0.241	a > b and b different from 0 The mediation is partial
Distri injus / Organizational deviance	0.477	0	a > b and b equals 0 The mediation is perfect

After these analyses, we can affirm that the hypothesis 8, 9 and 10, which deal with the mediating role of the psychological contract break in the relationship organisational injustice and deviance at work, are confirmed. More precisely, the transactional psychological contract break mediates the relationship between the procedural injustice and the organisational deviance. As far as the relational psychological contract break variable is concerned, it mediates the relationship between the interactional injustice and the interpersonal deviance. Hypothesis 10, which deals with the mediating role of the transactional psychological contract in the relationship between the distributive injustice and the organisational deviance, is also verified. However, hypothesis 11, which supports the mediating role of the relational psychological contract break in the relationship between the distributive justice and the interpersonal deviance, is invalidated as the first condition in the Baron and Kenny process (1986) was not respected.

#### 4. Discussion and managerial implications

##### 4.1. Discussion

Overall, the empirical investigation results confirm the theoretical option defended in this article. Confronting the theoretical model to the field reality has allowed us to validate ten hypotheses out of fourteen. Otherwise, the obtained results are congruent with the conclusions withdrawn in many works (McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992 ; Schaubroeck and al., 1994 ; Cropanzano and Prehar, 2001 ; Colquit and al., 2001 ; Kickul and al., 2002 ; Kickul, 2001 ; Turnley and Feldman, 1999 ; Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996 ; Lind and Tyler, 1992 ; Gagger and al., 2006 ; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2005 ; DelCampo, 2007 ; Chiu and Peng, 2008 ; Bordia and al., 2008). First of all, the results are in favour of the Tunisian employees' sensitivity towards the perception of the organisational injustice, the psychological contract break and the deviance at work (87% of the respondents affirm having experienced an injustice, 90% declared having perceived a break of their psychological contract and only 53% affirmed engaging in deviant behaviour at work). As for our sample, the break of the psychological contract terms in its relational and transactional dimensions is so ubiquitous that it has become a reality. This conclusion calls for a profound and thorough analysis of the possible consequences of such a contract break and legitimates the choice of this concept as a mediating variable that is able to explain the relationships between the organisational injustice and the deviance at work.

Secondly, unfair compartments, favouritism and fuzzy and confused procedures form common characteristics to the Tunisian firms (according to the realised interviews). Furthermore, the increased sensitivity to the injustice can be explained by the fact that the Tunisian culture is collectivist (Zghal, 1984; Zribi and El Akremi, 2005). Yet, in this type of culture, the sensitivity to the injustice is strong because the phenomenon of social contagion is ubiquitous. More precisely, the tests or the experiences endured by one member of the same group will be lived by each member of the group (Le Roy, 2008). Thirdly, despite the high rate of the injustice perception as well as that of the psychological contract break, the

percentage of the adoption of deviant behaviour is still not very high. This result can be explained by many reasons. First, deviant comportments have a negative connotation and are part of inconvenient and socially vituperative behaviour. Therefore, these comportments can be considered as socially committing by the employees, insofar as they arouse value judgements. Then, this result can be explained by the fact that other variables can intervene to moderate the frequency of adopting deviant behaviour at work, and this is despite the presence of the organisational injustice.

The results concerning the mediating effect of the psychological contract break confirm the already formulated theoretical option. Three of the four formulated hypothesis in this regard were confirmed (H8, H9 and H10). This finding reinforces the thesis according to which the perception of an injustice at work transits by a feeling of infringement of the psychological contract terms that link the employee to his organisation, which might affect the motivation of these employees to engage in deviant behaviour at work. Thus, for instance the positive link between the interactional injustice and the interpersonal deviance is partially mediatised by the relational psychological contract break. This underlies the existence of a direct link between the interactional injustice and the the interpersonal deviance. This direct relationship, as well as that established between the distributive injustice and the organisational deviance and that between the procedural injustice and the organisational deviance, allows us to confirm the Bies and Moag (1986) agent/ system model. These results are also in accordance with the works of Mc Farlin and Sweeney (1992) and those of Colquitt and al., (2001).

In fact, this model assumes that the distributive justice as well as the procedural justice are able to predict the comportments and attitudes linked to the system and to the organisation in general. However, the interactional component of the justice is better correlated to the attitudes and comportments oriented towards the organisational agents (hierarchical superior, co-worker). Our results thus confirm the leading role of each type of injustice in the workers' engagement in deviant behaviour. By doing so, we were able to contribute to better understand the complexity of the mechanisms by which the different facets of the justice distinctively influence the two components of the psychological contract which themselves show differently in organisational or even interpersonal deviance. In our study, taking into account the multi-dimensional character of the organisational injustice, the psychological contract and the deviance offers a further empirical validity in favour of the « *target-similarity model* » of the organisational justice (Lavelle and al., 2007; Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008) confirming thus the idea that the employees react in a mutual way oriented to the fairness of their organisational partners. The non-realisation of the organisational obligations instigates the employees to decrease their own obligations towards the organisation (Shore and Barksdale, 1998), according to the Gouldner principles of balance and reciprocity (1960).

#### **4.2. Managerial implications**

The application of justice can only be operated if the organisation and its officers dispose of a **will** to defend fair policies by creating a culture that values the organisational justice. Yet, the will can be created and maintained only when we manage to sensitise the officers about the virtues and the real benefits of the justice at work. The conceptual model and the results that spur from them form a proof highlighting the necessity of establishing the justice and eliminating all kind of injustice that is source of deviant behaviour at work.

This will forms a necessary condition but not sufficient to the application of the justice at work. Assuming that the appreciation of the justice often comes from a subjective, individual, contextual and socially determined judgement; Greenberg (1995) affirms that the justice is a matter of **communication** and that it is through **the management of impressions**

that the officers can manage to spread justice at the workplace. In fact, it is not enough to implement fair procedures and to suggest fair retribution systems, first we have to explain, discuss and give the possibility to the employees to express themselves. The practitioners must be aware that « *even the most well intentioned , kind manager and having the best justice spirit can fail in the attempt to win the adherence of his subordinates in case he cannot manage to convince them of his good intention and his authenticity* » (Greenberg, 1995, p. 432).

In other words, the managers have to explain the choice of the criteria and the norms of the justice to use (equality or fairness). Announcing publicly and explicitly some justifications concerning the salaries and promotions, offering the possibility of participating in decisions, giving explanations concerning the distribution of tasks and justifying the pay rises are so many practices that are able to develop an image that reflects a respect of the justice principles and norms. Building a fair atmosphere thus refers to starting a communication system handled in organisational justice dynamism, where the fairness practices become monotonous and integrated in the daily reality of life at work.

The results show that the rates of sensitivity to the injustice and to the psychological contract break as well as the frequency of engaging in deviant behaviour are alarming (compared to those presented by the literature). This finding can be explained by the phenomenon of **social contagion** which is a characteristic phenomenon of collectivist cultures such as Tunisia. Social contagion, which is impossible to jam neither by reclusion nor by isolation, must be recognised by managers as a source of social production that can serve to describe and explain the feelings and comportments in the entreprise (Sperber, 1996). This phenomenon must draw the managers' attention on the close link between each one's will and unconscious contamination. To give a meaning to the events inside the organisation, the individuals resort to their colleague's opinion, peer or relational network in which they are involved (social contract). In other words, an employee can perceive injustice without experiencing it personally. Likewise, an employee can deviate because he is surrounded by negative, pessimist and dishonest persons. According to us, the most suitable solution to deal with this contagion is to initiate an **entreprise culture** that can 'control' the phenomenon of social contagion. The managers will thus have a great interest in enrolling culture in a strategic register outgrowing a simple utopic slogan. Like training programmes, culture forms a management technique, which has meaning only when put into practice. In his book « *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* » Garland (2003) presents culture as a less costly and more efficient control system than the classic control by a superior following a hierarchical authority.

However, the results of the exploratory interviews have shown an outrageous shortage of the interviewed workers' feeling of belonging and attachment towards their entreprise. As for the chosen sample, the non-conformity to norms, the intention of leaving and the absence of a will for cooperation reflect a fragile, a less developed organisational identity or even amnesia of identity according to Mucy and Brunstein (2000). We call the managers and the human resources responsables to bet on the identification which is the source of creating and maintaining the social cohesion at work (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). It undermines selfishness and each one's introversion in the company and enhances sharing the perceptions of the life, the social imaginary. It also grows mutual confidence and cooperation (Bamber and Iyer, 2002). On these bases, we suggest a consideration of three essential practices. Firstly, the managers have to make clear the objectives and targets set by the entreprise. More precisely, it is about implementing a **management by objective** as a mechanism of management. Showing explicitly a clear vision allows the managers to ensure workers' implication (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994) and to make the workers' and the entreprise's objectives converge. Secondly, betting on the values as a source of indicators with which

managers can work, share the lived, evaluate the personal, transmit ideas, develop competences and perform in varied contexts could arouse workers' identification.

We have to recognise that in order to meet the objectives to be able to identify to the organization's values, this latter must build sense. A work deprived of sense, where the actors do not realise themselves, is often a source of demotivation and deviance. Since then, many researchers (Autissier and Wacheux, 2006 ; Dousset, 2007 ; Grellier, 2007 ; Lenhardt, 2002) have proposed the **management by sense** as a management tool allowing to build durable social relationships, to influence the actors towards a specific direction and to facilitate the workers' adhesion to the organisation's values and objectives. As a matter of fact, losing sense at work is considered the main reason of suicides at work (Pauchant, 1996; Regnault, 2004), professional weariness (Marsan, 2006) and stress (Molinier, 2006). Giving back sense to work seems a vital challenge in the actual organisational context (Mathieu *and al.*, 2000; Levesque *and al.*, 2001).

Therefore, we call Tunisian managers **to break the silence** at work. Difficult to detect and to evaluate, the silence in the organisation is a non verbal behaviour (Tangirala and Ramamijam, 2005) which is often expressed in absenteeism, avoidance and disengagement (Greenberg and al., 2007). The 'neutral' employee according to Camus (1951) is reputed for being good in certain organisational contexts insofar as he does not cause any problems. In this way, managers do not want neither listen to nor question silence. For them, if the employees resort to silence it is '*because they have nothing to say and because everything is alright*'. But employees often suffer in silence, do not denounce acts of psychological and sexual harassment, and conceal organisational injustices out of fear and worry (Donaghey, 2011). Breaking the silence is thus a challenge for the managers who worry about their employees' welfare and their companies' performance. Indeed, to understand employees' perception about the organisational injustice and the psychological contract break, and to minimise the recourse to deviance at work, the starting point would undoubtedly be allowing employees to express themselves (the voice). To do so, we propose a consideration of two main points. Firstly, breaking the silence in the enterprises and inviting employees to express themselves concerning the perception of injustice or even their evaluation of the psychological contract require an atmosphere of **confidence** (Hosmer, 1995, Mayer and Tomlinson, 2009). In fact, in the current workplace context, characterised by precariousness and employability, the terms of the psychological contract and the perception of the organisational justice develop according to a rhetoric of confidence (Goleman, 2009). Secondly, we advise managers to make workers participate in the decision making process (**the empowerment**) in order to overcome silence at work. Today, the managers have a great interest in overriding the principle of subordination by that of accountability, which advocates workers' freedom of expression and guarantees a fairly motivating context for workers' fulfilling (Lambert, 2008). In fact, giving power to workers means giving them the opportunity and the necessary tools to participate efficiently in decision making (Bartunek and Speitzer, 2006). Empowering the employee constitutes an active orientation « *through which the employee feels and hopes that he is capable of shaping his work context* » (Speitzer, 1995, p.1444). In this way, a feeling of appropriation is formed for the employees. These will no longer keep silence and will no longer seek to be absent. They are social actors and the organisation success is considered their own success.

## Conclusion

The objective of this article was to contribute in the understanding of the mechanisms through which the injustice perception is expressed in dysfunctional and deviant compartments. To do so, we have tried to clarify the arcanses of the injustice-deviance

relationship through a relational perspective, by integrating the psychological contract break as a mediating variable and the amiability as a moderating variable. In this way, this work has the merit and the originality of putting in relationship a set of variables, which certainly have been studied separately, but have never been treated jointly in the same model. Through this integrator framework, we managed to show that the relationship between the injustice and the deviance varies in terms of a certain number of elements that are accessible to employees when perceiving the situation. However, besides the clarifications brought by the results of this research and their managerial implications, it is necessary to bring a critical eye on this work which would allow us to plan further research.

Firstly, the choice of the variables that determine deviant behaviour at work presents the possibility of having neglected certain variables that could have a considerable effect on the development of dysfunctional compartments. For instance, it could have been interesting to integrate in our model some organisational variables relative to the structure, the power, the culture of the organisation or even to the emotions (negative affectivity) or societal variables such as the national culture.

Secondly, using the questionnaire research method conceals many angles, relative mainly to the non understanding of the questions asked, to the respondent mood and to the very circumstance of conducting the questionnaire. In this way, transcribing faithfully the individuals' representations concerning the different notions of our research through a questionnaire proves to be difficult. This difficulty is more reinforced by the very nature of the notions studied. Querying respondents about sensitive and engaging themes like justice and deviance causes the bias of social desirability. Despite the precautions taken (pre-test, reformulating certain questions, guaranteeing confidentiality...), the interviewees show certain diffidence and sometimes abstain from answering.

Finally, the punctual analysis that we conducted is certainly easier to realise giving probably a better research quality (in terms of convergence), but it can be supported and better exhaustive by integrating the environment changes. It would be then interesting to administer the same questionnaire at spread out periods. It would be wise to mobilise a longitudinal study enabling a diachronic understanding of the interaction between the variables of our model. Thus, it would be possible to take into account all the complexity of the interactions between the different chosen variables.

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