

# **A REVERSAL OF PERSPECTIVE: EXAMINING MAJOR CHANGE FROM EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE, EMOTIONS AND TRUST**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the years, various change models have been postulated to assist senior executives to bring about large-scale/radical change. Despite the obvious importance of leadership to change efforts, little previous research has investigated, holistically and in the context of major change, the relationship between senior management actions and employee responses. Furthermore, the change literature largely ignores the role that emotions play in employee responses to change initiatives. This paper address both areas, and develops a model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective, which depicts employees' justice perceptions related to senior executives as affecting trust directly and indirectly, through associated emotional responses.

**Key words:** organisational change, justice, trust, emotions,

## **INTRODUCTION**

Despite spanning a period of more than 50 years, the change literature is still very complex and fragmented, characterized by a diversity of opinion, practices and models. Since the 1980s many of the models of large-scale change assume that change is a continuous and unpredictable process of aligning the organisation with its external environment. Organisations are seen to evolve through periods of incremental change punctuated by external discontinuities, driven to action by either performance problems or shifts in the organisation's external environment (Nadler and Tushman,

1990). In response to these environmental triggers, numerous change models and frameworks have emerged, highlighting the need for greater environmental awareness, organisational flexibility and radical forms of intervention (Kotter, 1996; Jick, 1991; Dawson, 2003; Stace, 1996; Leifer, 1989). Many of these models are prescriptions designed for senior executives and change leadership teams.

The purpose of this paper is to assist organisations in exploring the human side of change, and in particular, understanding employee emotional and attitudinal outcomes. The paper commences with a brief overview of well-known change models and frameworks used to guide the implementation of major change, and the importance of employee responses. This is followed by an introduction to *a Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective* and the social exchange and justice theories which underpin it. A detailed explanation of the model follows, including a discussion of organisational practices and leadership attributes as antecedents to employee perceptions of justice and trust. Finally, the paper examines the mediating effects of emotions on employee trust during major change.

## **DRIVING LARGE-SCALE CHANGE**

What constitutes large-scale or “radical change” is, of course, multifarious. Transformational change is traditionally defined as requiring a “simultaneous shift in strategy, structure, people and culture” (Tushman and O’Reilly 1996:11) creating a change that “brings about something that is dramatically different than what there used to be”(Jick & Peiperl 2003: xvi). Typically it involves restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, management reorganisations, cultural change and re-engineering (Kotter, 1996). Invariably, such changes are often complex, wide-ranging and have a significant effect on divisions, functions or the entire organisation.

Generally, the prescriptions espoused in large-scale change models are written from the perspective of executive leadership. For example, Mento, Jones & Dirndorfer (2002) describe three models of change extolled as exemplars when discussing frameworks for major change. Firstly, they cite Kotter’s (1995) eight step model of change which focuses on vision, support, momentum and reinforcement. In particular, Kotter (1996:21) refers to the articulation of new values which translates as “creating better performance through customer and productivity-oriented behaviour, more and better leadership, and more effective management”. Jick’s (1991) model of change is cited as a ten

step approach where change is open-ended, and similar to Kotter's model, it emphasises "shared vision" and "strong" leadership. Finally Mento *et al* (2002) produce their own 12 step process which draws from Kotter's (1995) and Jick's (1991) frameworks, as well as General Electric's 7 step change acceleration process. These authors describe their framework as an "integrated and iterative process" to enable transformational change. Overall, these approaches recognise that clear vision, directive leadership, multiple intervention and rapid transformation, are vital considerations in the change process (Burnes, 2004).

Unlike these models, Dawson's (2003) processual change model asserts that there "can be no simple prescription for managing organisational transitions successfully, owing to time pressures and situational variables" (Burnes, 2004:284). Instead it focuses on understanding issues and challenges, and encourages exploration of alternative courses of action. However, as with models of the culture excellence school described above, Dawson's (2003:36) work supports the importance of context, environmental complexity and the substance of change, but not in a rigidly prescriptive fashion. Instead, it highlights the need for management flexibility but, more importantly, acknowledges the reality of human responses arising from organisational politics and conflict.

Most academics would agree that the key element in leading and managing change is indeed *people* - those who initiate change, those who implement it and those who are the recipients of change. The extant change literature certainly acknowledges the people factor through the examination of responses to change, the most notable of these being resistance. For decades, resistance was perceived by management as a negative phenomenon, a barrier to change often manifesting itself through counterproductive behaviours (King and Anderson, 1995; Merron, 1993; Waddell and Sohal, 1998). Although there are various factors which contribute to failed change, one of the key reasons people resist change is due to the inability of leaders to convince employees to support change and to commit the energy and effort necessary to implement it (Coetsee, 1999).

Two important elements missing from the models identified above are a culture and climate conducive to the emotional health and welfare of employees. Contemporary research into positive emotions has implications for organisational change. Often it is not the change itself which leads to negative affect and subsequent behaviours of withdrawal, footdragging, aggressive reactions,

resignation, sabotage, etc. It is *how* change and these days, how continuous and large-scale changes are managed. By virtue of their positions, senior executives may lack the contextual insight, experience or empathy to fully appreciate the employees' perspective in relation to change. If senior managers wish to encourage a more positive outlook toward change, they need to be aware of the types of conditions which produce positive feelings and which ultimately give rise to how individuals think and behave.

## **A REVERSAL OF PERSPECTIVE**

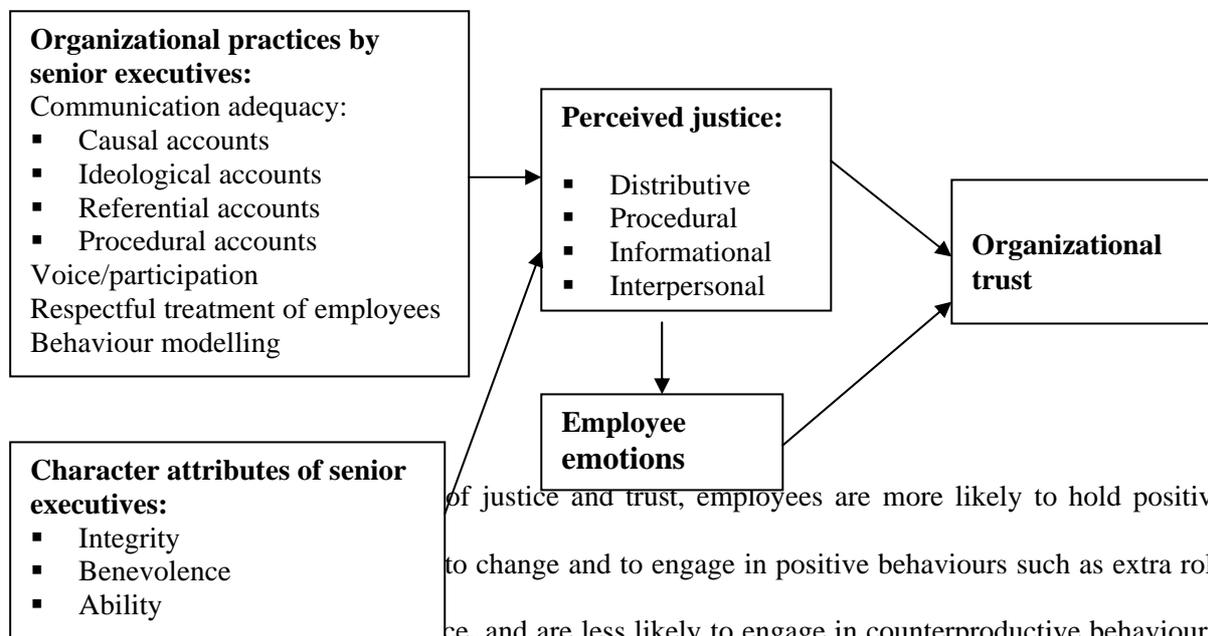
The *Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective* (See *Figure 1*) asserts that decisions and actions taken by senior management regarding major change will influence employee perceptions, but particularly perceptions of organisational justice. Indeed, senior executives, as leaders of the organisation, perform critical roles during such times. When there are significant changes to structure, culture, policies and procedures, senior executives are relied upon to solve problems, resolve conflict and allocate resources (Cobb, Wooten and Folger, 1995). In turn, employees assess these decisions and practices in terms of fair treatment. They also observe the extent to which executives act as role models, encouraging other managers to emulate fair processes and fair treatment of employees (Cobb, Wooten and Folger, 1995).

Specific change management practices such as communication, ensuring procedures are transparent, encouraging participation, respectful attitudes toward employees and behaviour modelling, influence employee justice perceptions. In addition to organisational practices, the character of senior management evokes employee scrutiny and perceptions of fairness.

Justice is generally referred to in the literature as a cognitive concept but its effects are both emotional and behavioural (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005). Research reveals that individuals who perceive that they are treated fairly will experience positive emotions, while those who perceive unfair treatment, will experience negative emotions (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Weiss, Suckow and Cropanzano, 1999). What is important here is not simply that emotions are influenced by fair and unfair treatment, but that there is a link between justice/injustice, trust, emotion, attitudes and work

behaviour (Weiss, Suckow and Cropanzano, 1999). The literature suggests that when actions are perceived by employees as just, there is a greater likelihood of trust in the organisation.

**Figure 1: Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective**



of justice and trust, employees are more likely to hold positive attitudes, are more likely to change and to engage in positive behaviours such as extra role behaviours, and are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviours.

The model also posits, that in the context of organisational change, emotions mediate employee trust in the organisation during major change.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

The *Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective* is predicated on social exchange theory. Acts of goodwill on the part of the organisation, (or its representatives), encourage reciprocal behaviour by employees who, in turn, feel obliged to repay the favour or “good deeds” (Aryee, Budhwar and Chen, 2002:268). These mutual obligations are unspecified, that is, it is unclear as to what form or when reciprocation will take place (Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997). Konovsky and Pugh (1994) assert that social exchange is based on employees trusting that the other parties in the relationship will meet their obligations in the long run. Thus, relations are not predicated purely upon economic exchange but are based on mutual benefit and trust. The subsequent attitudes and behaviours of actors in the relationship are derived from an outlook of “mutual support and investment in the relationship” (Aryee, Budhwar and Chen, 2002:262).

Social exchange theory suggests that “positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organisation and/or its representatives contribute to the establishment of high-quality exchange

relationships” (Settoon, Bennett and Liden, 1996:219). Positive social exchanges are also linked with positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2003), both of which can yield benefits for both the organisation and its employees (Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997).

### **Fairness Heuristic Theory**

Organisational change generates a heightened sensitivity to the fairness or otherwise of outcomes, processes and treatment. Change scenarios often trigger the adoption of fairness heuristics or shortcuts which are used to evaluate changed circumstances and changing relationships (Lind, Greenberg, Scott and Welchans, 2000). “This is in contrast to periods of relative stability when fairness heuristics are used merely to determine how much effort is placed in a relationship and the judgments themselves are used in a ‘mindless’ manner to interpret events without reassessing the judgment in light of ongoing experiences” (Lind, Greenberg, Scott and Welchans, 2000:560). More importantly, fairness heuristic theory suggests that individuals use their evaluations of outcome and process to decide whether the authority is fair and ought to be obeyed.

Given the nature of the relationship between employees and authority figures, such as senior executives, individuals feel uneasy about the types of outcomes they may receive and consequently need to know whether they can trust senior management. For instance, Van Den Bos, Wilke and Lind (1998) argue that because much of the information pertaining to the authority figure’s trustworthiness may not be available to employees, they may look to procedures as an indicator.

### **Justice Theory**

Generally, the literature focuses on employees and their fairness evaluation of three types of activity: the outcomes they receive from the organisation (distributive justice), formal policies or procedures by which outcomes are allocated (procedural justice) and the interpersonal treatment they receive from supervisors (interactional justice) (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003:325). However, Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Part and Ng (2001) add *interpersonal* and *informational* justice, suggesting that these have different correlates and that measuring them separately allows for further differences. Given the importance of communication in the context of major change (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder,

1993; Kotter, 1996), the *Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective* includes the added dimension of *informational* justice. The following section examines these four key dimensions of justice.

Distributive justice refers to judgments about the degree to which resources are distributed in a fair way (Daly and Geyer, 1994:624). Perceptions of distributive justice arise whenever there are explicit organisational allocations and outcomes, such as redundancies, restructure, transfers and retraining, as well as the more covert distribution of power, authority, responsibility and support (Cobb, Wooten and Folger, 1995; Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003:362). In the context of change, allocations may refer to “what” changes and “winners and losers” in the allocation of resources. In order to facilitate distribution, some form of criteria will have been used by management. Cobb, Folger and Wooten (1995) suggest that equitable distribution is generally based on merit, equality of loss and reward, and individual need. How the criteria is used will influence employee perceptions of fairness, and as a result, their perceptions of the change effort and the organisation as a whole (Cobb, Wooten and Folger, 1995). Fundamental to the issue of distribution is the acceptance by employees of the processes leading to the development of the distribution criteria.

If distributive justice is perceived as fair, high levels of trust by employees will follow (Cobb, Folger and Wooten, 1995). Trust is affected by the relative treatment of others, so that perceptions of inequity or unfairness lead to negative affect (eg anger and mistrust), particularly where an individual feels that he or she had a greater claim to an outcome than the individual to whom it was allocated.

Perceptions of fairness about the procedures (procedural justice) used to arrive at change decisions are also significant (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003:362). Procedural justice is considered to be more important than distributive justice in the context of organisational change because processes have a more enduring quality than the allocation of resources. Korsgaard, Sapienza and Schweiger (2002) contend that individuals make sense of change decisions based on their perceptions of procedural justice. Therefore, an organisation’s procedures are fair “to the degree that the decision-making processes demonstrate consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness, and ethicality” (Folger and Skarlicki, 1999:37). Individuals are

more concerned about procedures leading to the decision when decision outcomes are unfavourable (Korsgaard, Sapienza and Schweiger, 2002). Therefore, negative responses by employees are more likely to occur when they perceive the processes leading to a decision as unjust.

Effective communication plays a central role in engendering trust in a change context (informational justice) as it can allay fears and foster favourable attitudes. Information conveyed verbally rather than in writing was found to be more effective in enhancing justice perceptions (Konovsky, 2000). In contrast, a lack of explanation may be perceived as unfair, generating resentment toward management and the decision outcome (Daly, 1995). Daly and Geyer (1994:634) assert that “explanations for decisions by themselves are not likely to be effective unless they address issues that employees felt they have a right to know about in a manner that they regard as sincere”. This finding has implications for planning because it is during the pre-implementation phase that employees interpret the actions of executives, their trustworthiness and longer-term prospects of fair treatment by the organisation (Korsgaard, Sapienza and Schweiger, 2002).

The way individuals are treated (interpersonal justice) is likely to have a significant impact on their perceptions of fairness, not only about the process of implementation, but also “about the moral obligations to treat everyone fairly that underpins this process and thus, their levels of trust” (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003:364). Treatment by management can be translated as the extent to which employees are treated with dignity, respect, politeness and honesty (Tyler and Bies, 1990).

In the case of large-scale organisational change, it is feasible that employees perceive senior executives as the source of interpersonal justice or injustice through symbolic communication, observation and interaction, although these exchanges may occur less frequently than their interactions with their immediate supervisors.

## **MODEL OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE FROM A JUSTICE, EMOTIONS AND TRUST PERSPECTIVE**

The *Model of organisational change from a justice, emotions and trust perspective* incorporates a number of managerial practices which influence employee justice perceptions. Findings from previous research reinforce these behaviours but are rarely considered in a systemic,

holistic fashion (Brockner and Wisenfeld, 1996; Brockner, DeWitt, Grover and Reed, 1990; Cropanzano and Konovsky, 1995; Daly and Geyer, 1995; Gilliland and Schepers, 2003; Greenberg, 1994; Kernan and Hanges, 2002; Schaubroeck, May and Brown, 1994; Shapiro and Kirkman, 1999; Tyler and De Cremer, 2005). These practices include communication, voice/participation, respectful treatment of employees and behaviour modelling.

### **Communication adequacy**

The extant change literature consistently emphasises the importance of communication as a means by which individuals adapt to the change (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder 1998; Dent and Galloway Goldberg, 1999; Kotter, 1995). A number of very useful dimensions of information as the basis for executive communication are offered by Bies (1987). He refers to these dimensions as “accounts”. A social account is defined as “a verbal strategy employed by a person to minimize the apparent severity of the predicament.....” (Bies, 1987:294). In addition, there are accounts which are relevant to major change. For instance, there may be causal accounts about the situation leading to a decision to change. This type of information usually articulates the environmental context. Ideological accounts provide vision and guiding principles, eg values and superordinate goals. Referential accounts suggest that circumstances could be better or worse, and would more likely be better with change. Penitential accounts acknowledge loss and the difficulties faced by employees in light of change. Together, these accounts provide employees with information as to the justification for change, as well as indications as to the credibility of the source of information. Thus, social accounts can provide an overall picture and common understanding of change, as well as perceptions of fairness.

A study by Paterson and Cary (2002:98) suggested that high-quality communications about change increases employees’ perceptions of the fairness of treatment they receive from managers. This finding is supported by Kernan and Hanges (2002) whose study of a reorganisation found that communication quality was predictive of informational justice, not merely in the initial planning stages, but throughout the change process. This verifies the authors’ proposition that employees

address activities that extend beyond the initial change decision, particularly with regard to the extent to which there is consistency between organisational objectives and the implementation process.

### **Voice/participation**

Research suggests that participation or “voice”, through the expressions of concern, opinions and new ideas is related to both procedural justice and interactional justice (Kernan and Hanges, 2002). Voice influences perceptions of fairness even when it is unlikely to produce positive outcomes, or when the outcomes have already been decided upon (Miller, 2001). As Miller (2001:531) asserts, “People believe they are entitled to have their say and to be listened to in their dealings with others, whether these dealings are formal or informal”. The significance of voice stems from the principles of personal entitlement and the psychological contract or code of conduct. Individuals believe they are entitled to interpersonal sensitivity (Greenberg, 1994). They also expect accountability, or explanations for actions which have consequences for them (Bies and Shapiro, 1987).

### **Respectful treatment of employees**

Greenberg (1993) contends that justice perceptions are enhanced when employees are treated with respect. For example, group meetings were more likely to be effective when large numbers of employees are to be laid off (Gilliland and Schepers, 2003). Injustice is perceived when individuals experience a violation of a code of conduct, an insult or are otherwise treated with disrespect. These actions deprive individuals of an entitlement or subject them to “something they do not deserve” (Miller, 2001:533). The types of behaviours relevant to disrespectful treatment include the manager’s unpleasant demeanour, minimizing victim contact and escorting victims from the premises. Stecher and Rosse (2005:231) highlight the importance of interpersonal treatment by stating “perceptions of procedural justice are based, in part, on interpersonal treatment that conveys that the intentions of decision makers are benevolent and trustworthy”. Conversely, derogatory evaluations, deception, inconsiderate or abusive behaviour, public criticism or coercion, are seen as violating interpersonal justice (Konovsky, 2000).

### **Behaviour modelling**

Another significant dimension of the model relates to the behaviour of leaders, more specifically, their ability to enact procedures in a fair manner (Tyler and De Cremer, 2005). Tyler and De Cremer (2005) argue firstly, that if leaders exercise their authority in ways that are perceived as fair, employees will be supportive of the change goals and more likely to act in cooperative and supportive ways; and, secondly, that employees will more strongly identify with the organisation, its norms and goals. As Konovsky (2000:490) asserts, "...employees often use the apparent fairness of the authority as an indicator of whether the authority's orders are legitimate. If the leader appears to be acting fairly, the employee assumes that a directive is legitimate". From a change leadership perspective, the Tyler and De Cremer (2005) study concludes that procedures based on clearly stated rules, that are applied consistently and underpinned by genuine concern for the organisation and its employees, will positively influence employee perceptions of procedural justice.

Overall, three of the four justice dimensions are deemed to be differentially related to trust in the supervisor and the organisation (Aryee, Budhwar and Chen, 2002). Empirical research asserts that procedural justice is linked to organisational trust through employee perceptions of fair treatment and processes (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994; Mayer and Davis, 1999). Trust is considered an outcome of distributive, (Alexander, Sinclair and Tetrick, 1995 cited in Lewicki, Wiethoff and Tomlinson, 2005; Hubbell and Chory-Assad, 2005), procedural (Konovsky and Cropanzano, 1991; Korsgaard Schweiger and Sapienza, 1995; Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener, 2002; Mayer, Davis and Shoorman, 1995; Hubbell and Chory-Assad, 2005; Albrecht and Travaglione, 2003) and interactional justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Aryee, Budhwar and Chen, 2002; Becerra and Gupta, 2003) which leads to employee support or otherwise for decisions, decision makers and the organisation as a whole (Lewicki, Wiethoff and Tomlinson, 2005).

### **Character attributes of senior executives**

The trustworthiness of senior executives is another important consideration when attempting to gain employee support for change. It is based on observed and repeated behaviours of others (Caldwell and Clapham, 2003; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995), and can be defined as

“antecedent accumulated perceptual experiences that lead one to trust another person, institution, or organisation” (Caldwell and Clapham, 2003:351). Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (2005) posit that if individuals trust managers, their level of co-operation is increased and positive characteristics are attributed to them. Whitener (1997:400) supports this view, stating that “employees reciprocate with attitudes and actions...aimed less at the individuals who represent the organisation and more at the organisation itself. Their experiences with these decisions and practices can build or destroy their trust in the organisation”. Although as many as 10 characteristics of managerial behaviour have been identified as influencing trustworthiness, three character attributes appear to be most consistently mentioned in the literature (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995:717; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998). These attributes are: integrity, benevolence and ability (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

It is unlikely that employees will trust individuals whom they perceive to be dishonest or manipulative. In a longitudinal study conducted by Bews and Rossouw (2002), integrity was found to be a predictor of trustworthiness. Integrity is defined “as the application of a set of moral and ethical principles, acceptable to both trustor and trustee, which are predictable and reliable....” and includes a moral obligation to others, consistency, dependability and credibility (Bews and Rossouw, 2002:382). This view is supported by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995), who add that the consistency of the manager’s past actions and congruence of word and deed affect the extent to which the manager is deemed to have integrity. If, for instance, managers are seen to act with integrity, and keep their promises, individuals may feel less threatened.

The second attribute of benevolence is defined as “the perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor” (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995:719). Benevolence relates to the extent to which a manager is seen to want to do good to the employee, and therefore, empathy and social consideration would be attributes of benevolent leaders. It also includes acts undertaken in the interests of employees, such as loyalty, concern, altruism and goodwill (Bews and Rossouw, 2002). Management’s concern about employees is likely to lead to less threatening appraisals because employees may feel that management is not acting in a self-interested manner (Mishra and Spreitzer, 1999).

The final attribute relevant to trust is ability or the “group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain” (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995:717). Here, the term “ability” is differentiated from “competence”. Competence refers to technical expertise in a specific and fixed field, while ability relates to skills and aptitudes in another domain, thus reflecting a broader range of expertise, for example interpersonal communication. Ability therefore relates to the task as well as to the context. The belief that management has the ability to successfully implement change for the betterment of the organisation may lead to trust and to positive employee behaviours because employees feel confident in supporting the vision and change interventions. Trustworthiness is therefore determined by some combination of these three factors.

### **THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF EMOTION**

Justice is generally referred to as a cognitive concept but its effects are both emotional and behavioural (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005). Research reveals that individuals who perceive that they are treated fairly will experience positive emotions, while those who perceive injustice, will experience negative emotions (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Weiss, Suckow and Cropanzano, 1999). As Weiss, Suckow and Cropanzano (1999:786) comment, “much justice research has assumed, explicitly or implicitly, that emotion is the central mechanism through which a sense of unfairness is translated into work behaviour.”

For example, a study conducted by Mikula, Scherer and Athenstaedt (1998) found that anger, (followed by disgust, sadness, fear, guilt and shame), was the most likely emotional reaction to unjust events. Not only may employees experience positive or negative emotions, individuals may experience different emotions simultaneously. Emotional responses to justice vary across the justice dimensions (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Barclay, Skarlicki and Pugh, 2005). Distributive justice is regarded as the most tangible and easily assessed of the relevant justice dimensions. In a study focusing on discrete emotions and justice conducted by Weiss et al (1999), findings indicated that happiness was a consequence of perceived distributive justice, and anger a consequence of perceived distributive injustice. The fairer the distribution of outcomes, the more likely it is that individuals will

feel positively (Hegtvedt and Killian, 1999 cited in Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005). Generally, the perception of unfavourable outcomes has been found to be consistently related to anger and resentment (Stecher and Rosse, 2005).

From a procedural justice perspective, Miller (2001) argues that individual concerns regarding procedural justice or injustice are more powerful and independent of effects on outcomes. Indeed, there is widespread support for the argument that procedural justice is more important when outcomes are unfavourable than when they are favourable (Brockner and Wiesenfeld, 1996). Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996) concluded that if unfavourable outcomes result from unfair procedures, individuals were predicted to respond negatively to the injustice.

From an interpersonal perspective, Miller (2001) contends that insults or disrespectful treatment by others are a source of anger and aggression. In terms of interpersonal justice, the literature provides an overview of the range of actions that offend others and arouse feelings of injustice. Critical to this line of thinking is the notion of fair treatment and respect. The sources of disrespectful treatment may include unjustified blame, lack of recognition for performance, violations of promises, failure to admit an error, giving directives in an inappropriate tone and ruthless use of one's power (Miller, 2001). This finding is also supported by Stecher and Rosse (2005) whose research revealed that *both* distributive and interactional justice produced significant main effects on negative emotions. It was found that interactional injustice produced stronger negative responses than those created by distributive injustice. Moreover, adherence to fair procedures did not attenuate the negative emotion emerging from either distributive or interactional justice. This has significant implications for managers in relation to the quality of their interpersonal treatment of employees.

Skarlicki and Folger (1997, cited in Fox, Spector and Miles, 2001) reviewed recent justice research to conclude that employee responses to perceptions of injustice involve negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and a desire for retaliation, as well as a range of negative behaviours such as theft, (Greenberg, 1993), vandalism, sabotage, reduction of OCBs, withdrawal and resistance (Jermier, Knights and Nord, 1994, cited in Fox, Spector and Miles, 2001). A study by Fox, Spector and Miles (2001) supported these findings to suggest that contexts which are perceived as unfair by employees may lead to negative emotions and subsequently to counterproductive work behaviours.

Taking into account recent findings in the justice literature, the importance of employee emotional responses to injustice cannot be underestimated. These responses may ultimately translate into attitudes and behaviours unwelcomed by the organisation. It is argued that in the context of major organisational change, emotions mediate the relationship between justice and employee trust in the organisation. This proposition accords with the conclusion of a review conducted by Brockner and Siegel (1996), which suggested that it is not the main effects of justice that influence employee responses to decisions, but the trust generated by it.

The relationship between justice and trust is a complex one, with researchers in both the trust and justice disciplines unable to clearly define the link (Lewicki, Wiethoff and Tomlinson, 2005). This may be partly explained by the failure to take emotional responses to perceptions of justice into account.

## CONCLUSION

The change literature consistently asserts that in order to successfully implement change, it is imperative that leaders gain the commitment and support of employees. This paper has developed the *Model of organisational change from a justice and emotions perspective* which depicts employees' justice perceptions related to senior executives as affecting trust directly and indirectly, through associated emotional responses. It indicates that greater vigilance and sensitivity to justice issues on the part of senior executives as change strategists is required, particularly with regard to their credibility as leaders and the creation of a climate of fairness (Novelli, Kirkman and Shapiro, 1995). Their commitment is demonstrated through a set of interconnected management practices which encourage positive emotional responses to change.

Previous research suggests that employee perceptions of justice increase the likelihood of successful change implementation, as well as the mediating effects of emotions and trust on these responses (Cobb, Wooten and Folger, 1995). On the other hand, when employees perceive the actions of organisations as unfair, they may respond with negative feelings and attitudes, and engage in resistant behaviours (eg withdrawing effort) as retribution for the perceived injustice (Folger and Skarlicki, 1999).

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