

## **Procedural Justice, Negative Emotions, and Affective Commitment within Boundary-Spanning Roles: The Conditional Role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem**

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### **Abstract**

Procedural justice plays a central role in shaping employees' attitudes toward their organization, yet the emotional processes through which justice perceptions translate into negative emotional experiences remain insufficiently understood. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, Affective Events Theory, and Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), this study examines affective commitment as a conditional emotional pathway linking procedural justice to negative emotions while identifying organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as a critical boundary condition. Survey data were collected from 358 boundary-spanning employees, and the proposed moderated mediation model was tested using PROCESS Macro Model 14 with bootstrapping procedures. The results show that procedural justice is positively associated with affective commitment, which in turn is negatively related to negative emotions. The direct effect of procedural justice on negative emotions was nonsignificant, indicating an indirect-only mediation pattern. Furthermore, OBSE moderated the relationship between affective commitment and negative emotions, such that the negative association was significant at low levels of OBSE but became nonsignificant at high levels of OBSE. Accordingly, the indirect effect of procedural justice on negative emotions through affective commitment was conditional on employees' levels of organization-based self-esteem. These findings suggest that affective commitment

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operates as a conditional emotional pathway through which procedural justice shapes employees' emotional experiences, particularly among those with lower organization-based self-esteem. The study contributes to the justice and emotions literature by clarifying when and for whom procedural justice matters most for emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Procedural Justice, Affective Commitment, Negative Emotions, Organization-Based Self-Esteem, Moderated Mediation

**JEL Code :** D23, D63, J5

## 1. Introduction

Employee well-being has become a central concern for contemporary organizations, as growing evidence links employees' psychological health to sustainable performance, retention, and long-term organizational effectiveness. Beyond general notions of happiness or satisfaction, well-being is increasingly understood in terms of employees' emotional experiences at work, particularly the frequency and intensity of negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and anxiety (Diener et al., 1999; Warr, 2007). These negative emotional states are not merely transient reactions but are closely associated with impaired functioning, disengagement, and adverse health outcomes (Kelloway & Day, 2005). Their Healthy Workplace Model highlights the significance of a comprehensive approach that encompasses individual and organizational elements, as well as physical and psychosocial factors, as both contributors to and outcomes of healthy workplaces. Employee well-being encompasses how individuals feel about their lives, their work, and their psychological functioning, providing a useful lens for understanding how organizational practices influence everyday work experiences (Zheng et al., 2015). Organizational psychologists have studied well-being markers, such as job satisfaction, burnout, work engagement, and positive/negative affect, as outcome variables (Bakker, 2015).

Organizational justice has been widely recognized as a critical antecedent of employee well-being. Several studies (e.g., Garg et al., 2014; Huong et al., 2016; Le et al., 2018) confirmed that justice is a significant predictor of well-being. Prior research consistently shows that perceptions of unfairness are associated with heightened stress, emotional strain, and reduced psychological well-being (Colquitt et al., 2013; Robbins et al., 2012). In particular, procedural justice, which concerns the fairness of decision-making processes, has been linked to employees' sense of control, predictability, and security—factors that are central to emotional well-being (Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). This study focuses on procedural justice because, unlike one-time outcomes (distributive justice), procedures are experienced every day. As Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) suggest, this daily exposure turns unfairness into a 'chronic stressor' rather than a temporary event, leading to long-lasting negative emotions. According to Thibaut and Walker

(1975), procedural justice is a psychological anchor providing employees with a sense of control over their environment. Maintaining the perception of fair decision-making by giving a voice to their concerns serves as a vital tool in creating a climate of psychological safety. This is especially important in boundary-spanning roles where employees feel a high level of external uncertainty since it decreases the level of uncertainty within the organization.

Boundary roles serve as crucial connections between organizations and their surrounding environments, frequently placing individuals in positions where they encounter conflicting expectations from both internal and external stakeholders. This complexity is particularly pronounced in boundary-spanning roles within service settings, which have attracted significant academic attention due to their critical impact on customer experiences and overall organizational outcomes. A comprehensive review of four decades of research focused on frontline service employees reveals that their psychological states, the nature of interpersonal relationships, and the characteristics of their work environments play vital roles in the effectiveness of service delivery (Subramony et al., 2021). Negative emotions and perceptions of unfairness might hinder boundary-spanning employees' capacity to sustain high-quality client interactions, ultimately threatening service quality, customer trust, and long-term organizational effectiveness (Kim et al., 2024; Kim & Yeo, 2025).

Despite extensive evidence linking procedural justice to employee well-being, the emotional mechanisms underlying this relationship remain insufficiently specified. Procedural justice is not an emotion in itself but rather a cognitive and relational evaluation of how organizational decisions are made. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), justice perceptions are expected to shape employees' emotional experiences indirectly by influencing how they interpret their relationship with the organization. In this regard, affective commitment—defined as an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991)—represents a critical explanatory mechanism. Fair procedures signal organizational respect and reliability, fostering affective commitment, which in turn provides employees with a sense of belonging and emotional security. When such emotional attachment is weakened, employees become more vulnerable to negative emotional reactions, suggesting that affective commitment constitutes a key emotional pathway linking procedural justice to negative emotions.

However, employees do not rely on this emotional pathway to the same extent. An important boundary condition lies in organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), which reflects the extent to which employees perceive themselves as valued and competent organizational members (Pierce et al., 1989). From a Conservation of Resources perspective (Hobfoll, 1989), OBSE functions as an internal psychological resource that supports emotional regulation. Employees with high OBSE possess stronger internal resources and are therefore less dependent on

relational cues, such as affective commitment, to manage negative emotions. In contrast, when OBSE is low, employees are more reliant on affective commitment as a relational resource that helps them cope with perceived unfairness and emotional strain. Consequently, the emotional pathway from affective commitment to negative emotions is expected to be particularly salient under conditions of low OBSE, highlighting the conditional nature of justice–emotion relationships.

Building on these arguments, the present study examines how and under what conditions procedural justice shapes employees' negative emotional experiences. We propose a second-stage moderated mediation model in which procedural justice influences negative emotions indirectly through affective commitment, with this emotional pathway being contingent upon employees' levels of organization-based self-esteem. By focusing on negative emotions as a central component of employee well-being, this study moves beyond simplified direct-effect assumptions and highlights the conditional nature of justice–emotion relationships. Therefore, it makes three contributions to literature. First, it clarifies the emotional mechanism through which procedural justice affects well-being by identifying affective commitment as a key explanatory pathway. Second, it demonstrates that this pathway is not uniform across employees, revealing OBSE as a critical condition that shapes emotional regulation processes. Third, by examining these dynamics within boundary-spanning roles, the study provides insight into emotionally demanding work contexts in which procedural fairness and self-related resources are particularly consequential.

## **2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses**

### **Procedural Justice and Affective Commitment**

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of organizational processes, including consistency, transparency, and voice (Colquitt, 2001; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). In their meta-analysis, Colquitt et al. (2013) included a consideration of the links between measures of affect and organizational justice. Fair procedures have been shown to reduce negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and anxiety, while enhancing positive emotions such as enthusiasm, pride, and satisfaction. In this study, we specifically focus on procedural justice as it represents the structural and systemic integrity of the organization. While distributive justice is generally associated with personal outcomes and interactional justice with immediate leader-member exchanges (Colquitt et al., 2013), procedural justice encompasses the rules and processes that govern the workplace. Procedural unfairness is often experienced as a chronic characteristic of the organizational environment.

The Affective Events Theory is used as the theoretical framework of this study (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Affective Events Theory proposes that affective experiences are important antecedents of work-related attitudes and behaviors. Extensive research in organizational behavior has demonstrated that fair

procedures foster positive employee attitudes, particularly affective commitment (Colquitt et al., 2001; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), fair procedures signal that the organization values its members and treats them with respect, prompting employees to reciprocate through stronger emotional attachment to the organization. Unlike interactional justice, which is rooted in interpersonal treatment, procedural justice reflects trust in organizational systems and structures, making it especially relevant for sustaining affective commitment in boundary-spanning roles where employees frequently interact with external stakeholders.

**Hypothesis 1.** Procedural justice is positively related to affective commitment.

### **Affective Commitment and Negative Emotions**

Affective commitment is defined by Allen and Meyer (1996, p. 253) as “identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to organization.” Affective commitment is characterized by employees’ identification with organizational values, their readiness to exert considerable effort for the organization, and a strong desire to maintain organizational membership (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1997) underlined the factors influencing affective organizational commitment: organizational characteristics, personal characteristics, and work experiences.

Negative emotions at work—such as anger, frustration, and anxiety—are commonly elicited by experiences of uncertainty, lack of control, or perceived unfairness. According to Affective Events Theory (AET), workplace experiences influence employees’ emotional reactions through cognitive and relational interpretations rather than through direct stimulus–response mechanisms (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Emotions constitute a foundational mechanism functioning between threatening events and behavioral responses (Weiss et al., 1999).

**Hypothesis 2.** Affective commitment is negatively related to negative emotions.

### **The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment**

Integrating Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), procedural justice is unlikely to influence negative emotions directly. Instead, fair procedures shape employees’ emotional attachment to the organization, which subsequently affects their emotional experiences. In this sense, affective commitment functions as an explanatory emotional pathway linking procedural justice to negative emotions.

Prior research suggests that employees perceiving higher procedural justice are more likely to develop stronger affective commitment. Employees with stronger

affective commitment are more likely to interpret workplace events in less threatening ways, thereby experiencing fewer negative emotional reactions. Empirical studies consistently show that affective commitment is associated with lower levels of strain, emotional exhaustion, and negative affect (Meyer et al., 2002).

Research on organizational commitment increasingly highlights affective commitment as the core form of commitment, as it reflects employees' emotional attachment to and identification with the organization (Solinger et al., 2008). Compared with other forms of commitment, affective commitment shows stronger and more consistent associations with key employee outcomes, including well-being and reduced withdrawal behaviors (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Riketta, 2002). Because affective commitment represents a psychological bond rather than a calculative or normative attachment, it plays a central role in shaping how employees interpret organizational experiences and regulate their emotional responses at work (Klein et al., 2012; Solinger et al., 2008).

When procedural justice is low, employees' emotional attachment to the organization weakens, increasing vulnerability to negative emotional reactions. Conversely, fair procedures strengthen affective commitment, reducing the likelihood and intensity of negative emotions. This indirect-only pathway consists of prior justice research emphasizing attitudinal mechanisms rather than direct emotional effects (Colquitt et al., 2013).

**Hypothesis 3.** Affective commitment mediates the relationship between procedural justice and negative emotions.

### **The Moderating Role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem**

Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) reflects the extent to which employees perceive themselves as capable, valuable, and important organizational members (Pierce et al., 1989). A strong relationship between OBSE and positive organizational behavior is highlighted in Pan et al. (2014) and by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004). Kim and Beehr (2018) illustrated the connection between OBSE and meaningful work, whereas Pierce et al. (2016) highlighted the strong correlation between OBSE and psychological as well as subjective well-being. Gardner et al. (2015) demonstrated that OBSE supports employees' capacity to regulate behavior and persist in the face of challenges, suggesting that OBSE plays an active role in how individuals manage adverse work experiences. OBSE constitutes a key personal resource that influences how employees regulate emotional experiences at work.

Drawing on Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), individuals with higher OBSE possess stronger internal resources and are therefore less dependent on relational or organizational cues for emotional regulation. When OBSE is low, employees are more reliant on affective commitment as a relational

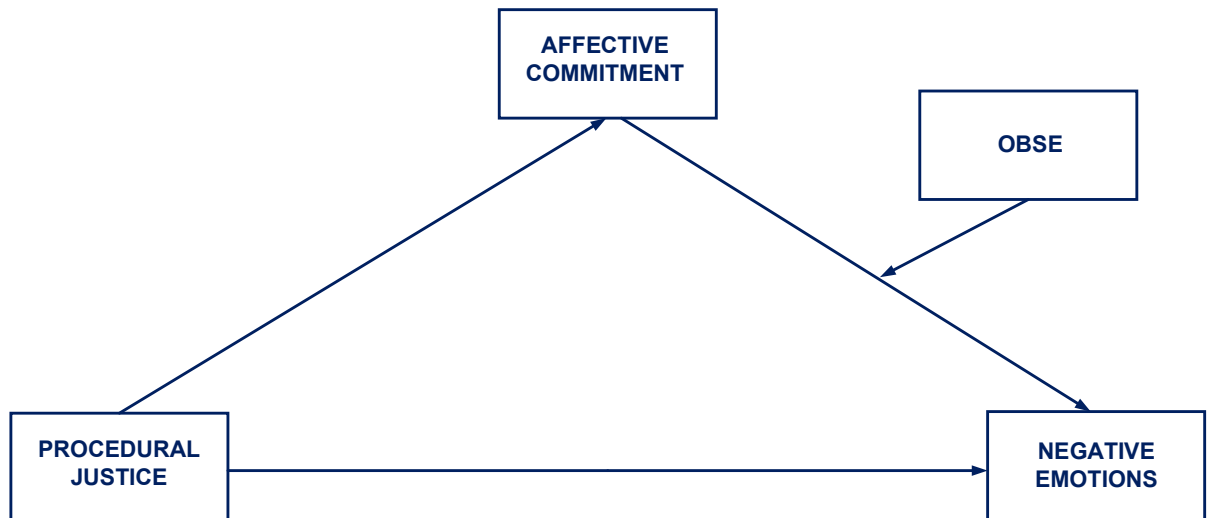
resource to manage negative emotions. In contrast, when OBSE is high, employees' emotional regulation is supported by internal self-worth, weakening the influence of affective commitment on negative emotions.

**Hypothesis 4.** Organization-based self-esteem moderates the relationship between affective commitment and negative emotions.

### **A Conditional Indirect Effect Model**

These arguments suggest a second-stage moderated mediation model in which procedural justice influences negative emotions indirectly through affective commitment, with this indirect effect being contingent upon employees' levels of OBSE. Specifically, affective commitment constitutes a critical emotional pathway through which procedural justice shapes negative emotions among employees with lower OBSE, whereas this pathway becomes weaker or nonsignificant when OBSE is high.

**Hypothesis 5.** Organization-based self-esteem moderates the indirect effect of procedural justice on negative emotions through affective commitment.



**Figure 1:** The conceptual model of the study

## **3. Methodology**

### **Sample**

The data for this study were gathered from the staff of 14 commercial banks in Istanbul, Türkiye, using a purposive sampling method. This non-probability sampling was chosen because the research focuses on service-related aspects that require respondents to have direct and ongoing interactions with customers.

Therefore, only employees who are in customer-facing or boundary-spanning roles were chosen for the sample. Owing to confidentiality, we are prohibited from revealing the identities of these institutions. The participants were informed that the study was conducted for academic purposes to further the understanding of specific human behaviors in the workplace. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured the confidentiality of their responses, which ensured honest and uninhibited engagement. Explicit consent was acquired from participants.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed, and 380 usable responses were received. Due to missing data, listwise deletion resulted in a final analytical sample of 358 respondents. The sample ( $N = 358$ ) was composed of frontline office workers (31%), customer representatives (29%), and call center workers (40%). The average age was 31.7 (SD: 3.5). The female rate is 45.4%, and the male rate is 54.6%. 75% of the samples have at least a university degree, while 24% hold a master's degree. 55% of the sample has at least 5 years of experience.

## Measures

All study instruments were initially translated into Turkish and then backtranslated into English by two bilingual researchers, using Brislin's (1986) methodology to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence. Subtle linguistic adjustments were made to improve clarity and suitability for the financial context. All scales had satisfactory psychometric properties, as detailed below.

- *Procedural justice*: Constructed by Naumann and Bennett (2000), which they adapted from Moorman (1991), this Likert-type scale, ranging between 1 and 5, was applied here for the measurement of procedural justice. Sample items: *Decisions taken by our superiors' respect coherent rules and procedures. Our superiors ask our opinions before making decisions.* The psychometric properties obtained in our analyses were satisfactory (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$  and factor load  $>.40$ ). This scale was originally used in several scientific studies in Türkiye (Minibas-Poussard et al., 2017; Minibas-Poussard et al., 2023).
- *Negative emotions*: The Job-Related Affective Well-being Scale (Van Katwyk et al., 2000) was used, with 10 items for negative emotions, with Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 5. Sample items: *My job made me feel angry. My job made me feel discouraged.* Very satisfactory psychometric properties were obtained (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.95$  and factor load  $> 0.60$ ).
- *Affective Commitment*: Assessed with the scale of Allen and Meyer (1996) is used. 6 items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were used (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$  factor load  $> 0.60$ ). Sample items: *I would be very*

*happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization.*

- *Organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE):* A ten-item scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (Pierce et al.,1989) was implemented. Sample items: *In my workplace, I am trusted. In my workplace, I am important.* The psychometric results of our analyses were satisfactory (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.88$  and factor load  $> 0.50$ ).

Harman’s single-factor test was conducted to evaluate the potential influence of common method bias. An unrotated exploration factor analysis encompassing all items indicated that the first factor represented 12.49% of the total variance, well below the suggested 50% threshold. This finding suggests that common method bias is improbable to pose a substantial risk to the validity of the results. In addition, we conducted a full collinearity VIF assessment; VIF values ranged from 1.07 to 2.74, indicating no evidence of problematic collinearity and alleviating concerns regarding common method bias.

#### 4. Results

Data analysis was accomplished by using SPSS 22 and PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018). To test the moderated mediation model (Model 14), a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals was employed. Table 1 illustrates the examination of means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients among the variables, offering preliminary insights into their linkages.

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Negative emotions	24.91	8.52			
2. Procedural justice	30.89	6.73	-.21**		
3. Affective commitment	23.32	4.57	-.39**	.60**	
4. OBSE	40.95	4.17	-.24**	.30**	.66**

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

All variables exhibited substantial associations in the anticipated directions. In accordance with H1, procedural justice is positively correlated with affective commitment ( $r = .60, p < .001$ ), and as predicted in H2, affective commitment is inversely associated with negative emotions ( $r = -.39, p < .001$ ).

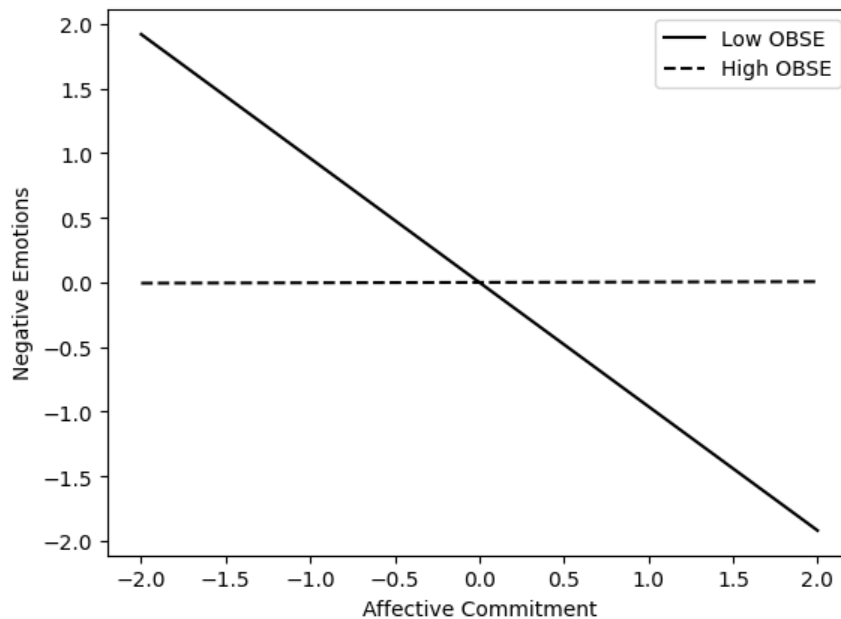
A simple mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether affective commitment mediates the relationship between procedural justice and negative emotions (H3). Results showed that procedural justice was positively and significantly related to affective commitment ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = 15.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in affective commitment. When predicting negative emotions, affective commitment was negatively and significantly associated with negative emotions ( $\beta = -.83$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t = -7.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, the direct effect of procedural justice on negative emotions was not significant (effect = .08,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t = 1.03$ ,  $p = .30$ ).

Bootstrapping analyses with 5,000 resamples revealed a significant indirect effect of procedural justice on negative emotions through affective commitment (indirect effect =  $-.35$ , 95% CI [ $-.47$ ,  $-.24$ ]). Because the indirect effect was significant while the direct effect was nonsignificant, the results support a full mediation pattern, indicating that affective commitment serves as an explanatory mechanism linking procedural justice to negative emotional experiences.

A moderation analysis was to examine whether organization-based self-esteem moderates the relationship between affective commitment and negative emotions (H4). Results indicated that affective commitment was negatively associated with negative emotions ( $\beta = -5.03$ ,  $SE = .60$ ,  $t = -8.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and OBSE also showed a significant negative main effect on negative emotions ( $\beta = -2.41$ ,  $SE = .38$ ,  $t = -6.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Importantly, the interaction between affective commitment and OBSE was significant ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $t = 7.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for a significant increase in explained variance in negative emotions ( $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F = 50.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The proposed moderated mediation model was tested (H5). Procedural justice was specified as the independent variable, affective commitment as the mediator, negative emotions as the outcome variable, and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as the moderator of the second-stage path. Results showed that procedural justice was positively and significantly associated with affective commitment ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = 15.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ), explaining a substantial proportion of variance in affective commitment. This finding indicates that employees who perceive organizational procedures as fair report stronger emotional attachment to their organization.

When predicting negative emotions, affective commitment was negatively related to negative emotions ( $\beta = -5.04$ ,  $SE = .61$ ,  $t = -8.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that higher levels of affective commitment are associated with lower levels of negative emotional experiences. OBSE was also negatively associated with negative emotions ( $\beta = -2.47$ ,  $SE = .40$ ,  $t = -6.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ).



**Figure 2.** Slope analysis: The moderating effect of OBSE.

In contrast, the direct effect of procedural justice on negative emotions was not significant (effect =  $-.06$ , SE =  $.08$ ,  $t = -0.70$ ,  $p = .48$ ), indicating that procedural justice does not directly influence negative emotions when affective commitment and OBSE are taken into account.

The interaction between affective commitment and OBSE was significant ( $\beta = .11$ , SE =  $.02$ ,  $t = 6.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for a significant increase in explained variance in negative emotions ( $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F = 47.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Bootstrapping analyses with 5,000 resamples indicated that the indirect effect of procedural justice on negative emotions through affective commitment was conditional on OBSE. Specifically, the indirect effect was significant at low levels of OBSE (indirect effect =  $-.38$ , 95% CI [ $-.51$ ,  $-.27$ ]) but not at high levels of OBSE (indirect effect =  $.04$ , 95% CI [ $-.13$ ,  $.21$ ]). The index of moderated mediation was significant (index =  $.05$ , Boot SE =  $.01$ , 95% CI [ $.03$ ,  $.06$ ]), providing support for the proposed moderated mediation model.

## 5. Discussion

The present study sets out to examine how and under what conditions procedural justice shapes employees' negative emotional experiences, with a particular focus on affective commitment as an explanatory pathway and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as a boundary condition. The findings provide clear support for the proposed framework and offer several insights into the justice–emotion relationship within the broader well-being literature.

The current study distinguishes procedural justice from other dimensions, such as distributive justice, due to its discrete and episodic nature (Colquitt et al., 2001). Procedural justice, on the other hand, represents a persistent structural feature of the work environment. Consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of fair procedures for employee attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2001; Meyer & Allen, 1991), the results indicated that procedural justice was positively associated with affective commitment. Importantly, procedural justice did not exhibit a significant direct effect on negative emotions. Rather than constituting a limitation, this finding reinforces the central premise of the study: procedural justice influences emotional experiences indirectly, through relational and attitudinal mechanisms. This indirect-only mediation pattern aligns with theoretical perspectives suggesting that justice perceptions are cognitive and relational evaluations rather than immediate emotional triggers (Blau, 1964; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Fair procedures appear to reduce negative emotions not by directly regulating employees' affective states but by strengthening their emotional attachment to the organization. Based on COR Theory, unfair procedures represent a continuous resource threat. Our findings confirm that when these procedures are perceived as unfair, they deplete the employees' affective commitment. This lack of commitment then serves as a bridge, transforming structural unfairness into chronic negative emotions and exhaustion (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In line with this view, recent research confirms that fairness in decision-making processes enhances employees' trust and emotional attachment to the organization (Meisy et al., 2025). Moreover, Poon (2012) highlights the critical role of affective commitment in shaping employee responses, particularly in contexts where procedural fairness is perceived to be lacking.

Although affective commitment has often been examined as an attitudinal outcome or a predictor of behavioral intentions (e.g., Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008), the present findings highlight its relevance as an emotional pathway through which OBSE influences negative emotional experiences. Several studies have highlighted the buffer role of high OBSE (e.g., Lapointe et al., 2011; Pierce & Gardner, 2004), but here the exacerbating effect of low OBSE is observed. Employees with lower OBSE appear to rely more strongly on relational resources, such as affective commitment, to manage negative emotions, whereas those with higher OBSE may draw on internal self-related resources instead.

This study contributes to organizational justice and well-being literature by clarifying how procedural justice shapes employees' emotional experiences. Following Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), we show that organizational rules do not trigger emotions instantly; they go through a 'mental filter.' The lack of a direct effect in our study confirms that procedural injustice first damages the employee's overall bond with the firm. It is this damaged bond—not the rule itself—that ultimately leads to sustained negative emotions. Rather than

exerting a direct influence on negative emotions, procedural justice appears to operate through relational and attitudinal processes, most notably affective commitment. This finding supports the view that justice perceptions function primarily as cognitive and relational evaluations that shape emotions indirectly, rather than as immediate emotional triggers. In this respect, the study aligns with broader theoretical perspectives emphasizing the complexity of justice–emotion relationships and the need to move beyond simple main-effect models (Blau, 1964; Cohen-Charash & Byrne, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

## **6. Managerial Implications**

The findings of this study underscore the central role of managers in shaping employees' emotional experiences at work by influencing both affective commitment and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). In this regard, procedural justice should be understood not only as a formal organizational principle but also as a relational signal enacted through managers' day-to-day behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2001). Skarlicki and Latham (2013) emphasize that organizational justice is not merely a dispositional attribute but a set of learnable managerial behaviors that can be developed through training. Accordingly, justice-focused training programs that enhance managers' capacity to apply fair procedures and communicate decisions transparently may play an important role in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness and related work attitudes.

The results underscore the importance of organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) in emotional regulation, highlighting that managerial behaviors that signal employee value and competence reinforce OBSE (Pierce et al., 1989). Practices such as role-affirming feedback, recognition, and task empowerment are vital for enhancing OBSE, especially in high-stress environments where employee worth may diminish. The findings also indicate that a one-size-fits-all managerial strategy may not effectively support employee well-being, as those with lower OBSE rely more on emotional commitment and are sensitive to inconsistencies in managerial communication. Conversely, employees with higher OBSE have greater internal resources for emotional stability and are less dependent on external validation. Therefore, managers should customize their approaches to maintain fairness and recognition, particularly for employees with limited psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Building on Niven's (2025) argument that emotion regulation is embedded in social and self-related contexts, the present findings imply that organization-based self-esteem constitutes a critical resource through which employees manage negative emotional experiences at work. Managerial efforts that reinforce employees' sense of organizational value may therefore indirectly contribute to healthier emotional functioning.

The findings suggest the importance of leadership approaches that actively support employees' emotional functioning and strengthen their attachment to the organization. Managers should therefore be attentive to the ways in which

leadership behaviors and human resource practices jointly influence affective commitment and emotional experiences at work. Recent evidence suggests that employees' emotional awareness contributes positively to the development of commitment, highlighting the value of emotionally informed management practices (Santiago-Torner et al., 2024). To foster such commitment, close alignment between leadership styles and human resource management systems is essential. Transformational leadership has been shown to promote climates characterized by respect, participation, and mutual involvement, which subsequently reinforce employees' affective commitment and work-related outcomes (Ribeiro et al., 2018). In addition, research indicates that ethical leadership enhances affective commitment through employees' perceptions of organizational support, emphasizing leaders' role in conveying fairness, care, and moral integrity (Haque et al., 2019). By demonstrating responsible leadership and acknowledging employees' emotional bonds with the organization, managers may also reduce turnover intentions via strengthened affective commitment.

Beyond day-to-day leadership practices, recent studies point to the importance of organizational initiatives that integrate emotional and ethical considerations into broader management strategies. For instance, Farmanesh et al. (2025) show that investments in emotional intelligence training, together with practices that encourage affective commitment, contribute to safer and healthier work environments and support long-term organizational sustainability. Similarly, corporate social responsibility initiatives centered on ethical programs, transformational leadership, and ethical climates have been found to enhance organizational competitiveness by reinforcing employees' perceptions of CSR and their affective commitment to the organization (Ng et al., 2025). Moreover, understanding organizational culture and adopting management practices that fit this context can facilitate positive employee behaviors, such as knowledge sharing, which are closely linked to commitment and engagement (Ng, 2023). Collectively, these insights suggest that strengthening affective commitment and emotional resources should be viewed as a strategic managerial priority rather than a peripheral well-being initiative.

## **7. Limitations and Future Research**

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and future research would benefit from longitudinal or experience-sampling approaches to capture dynamic emotional processes. Second, although the focus on procedural justice allowed for a theoretically coherent model, future studies may examine how different justice dimensions jointly shape emotional pathways. Finally, the sample comprised boundary-spanning bank personnel located in İstanbul, Türkiye; the results may not generalize to other cultural or occupational environments.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study sets out to advance understanding of employee well-being by examining how and under what conditions procedural justice shapes negative emotional experiences at work. Moving beyond simplified assumptions of direct effects, the findings demonstrate that procedural justice influences negative emotions indirectly, through affective commitment, and that this emotional pathway is conditional upon employees' organization-based self-esteem.

By identifying affective commitment as an explanatory emotional pathway, the study clarifies why procedural justice does not necessarily translate into immediate emotional outcomes. Fair procedures appear to matter for well-being not because they directly regulate emotions but because they strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization, which in turn reduces vulnerability to negative emotional experiences. Importantly, this pathway is not uniform across employees. When OBSE is low, affective commitment plays a central role in emotional regulation, whereas at high levels of OBSE, employees rely more on internal psychological resources, rendering the commitment–emotion link less salient.

These findings contribute to the justice and well-being literatures by emphasizing the conditional and relational nature of justice–emotion processes. Rather than positioning procedural justice as a universal emotional remedy, the study highlights that its emotional consequences depend on both organizational signals and individual psychological resources. In doing so, the study underscores the value of adopting conditional process perspectives to better capture the complexity of emotional experiences at work.

From a broader perspective, the results suggest that improving employee well-being requires attention not only to individual coping strategies but also to the emotional architecture of organizations, that is, the ways in which fair procedures, emotional attachment, and self-related resources jointly shape how employees experience their work. By integrating these elements, the present study offers a more nuanced understanding of how procedural justice contributes to emotional well-being and provides a foundation for future research seeking to unpack the relational and contextual dynamics of workplace emotions.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The data were collected in 2019, prior to the formal requirement for Ethics Committee Approval in Türkiye, which was 2020. The French Code of Ethics for Psychologists (2012) and the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2017) were both embraced by the authors.

**Informed Consent Statement:** The goal of the study was explained to the participants, who were also given the assurance that their personal information would be kept private. Explicit consent was required for participation in the study

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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