

The Effects of Situational and Individual Differences on  
Employee Perceptions of Favoritism in the Workplace

by

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## ABSTRACT

The present study sought to expand the current body of fairness literature by exploring the way situational characteristics affect employee perceptions of favoritism in the workplace. Specifically, this study examined how supervisor consistency in enforcing rules (inconsistent enforcement of rule, consistent enforcement of rule, and consistent disregard of rule) and the level of importance of the rule being enforced (low or high importance) individually affect and interact to affect employee perceptions of procedural and interpersonal justice and favoritism. Further, very little research exists that investigates the impact both situational and individual differences – specifically in personality – have on employees’ perceptions of fairness and favoritism. The present study explores the relationships between an individual’s rule orientation, belief in a just world, experiences with past supervisors, personality, positive and negative affect, and gender and their propensity to perceive a situation as unjust. All participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk and randomly assigned one of six scenarios depicting a combination of supervisor consistency and rule importance. Participants were then asked to provide ratings indicating the level of favoritism and/or injustice they perceived occurred in their assigned scenario and complete questionnaires measuring the aforementioned individual differences. The results demonstrated that supervisor consistency significantly influenced perceptions of procedural and interactional justice, and that supervisor consistency and rule importance interacted to influence perceptions of favoritism. Additionally, the study found that individuals with higher rule orientations, belief in a just world, and emotional stability and lower negative affect are less likely to perceive injustice or favoritism in the workplace than their counterparts.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition and role of favoritism in the workplace differ across studies and areas of research. Some contend that favoritism occurs when an individual or group is favored and another is neglected or disadvantaged (Ehrlich, Flexner, Carruth, & Hawkins, 1980). Other researchers choose to look at favoritism as a byproduct of a heuristic that aids humans in decision- and judgment-making. While these judgments may favor an individual or group, they may not necessarily have negative consequences for those not favored (DiDonato, Ullrich, & Krueger, 2011). Others still focus on who the beneficiaries of favoritism are in relation to the person doling out resources, rewards, and opportunities (e.g., friends, relatives, acquaintances; Daskin, 2013). Finally, some conceptualize favoritism as a mechanism for maintaining one's social identity (Dimdins & Montgomery, 2004). Sometimes the expression of favoritism comes from managers or organization members in positions of power, (Daskin, 2013; Phan, 2003), and other times it is expressed by peers, or individuals on the same level, as the affected (DiDonato et. al, 2011; Weeks, Weeks, & Long, 2016). The outcomes of perceived favoritism can manifest in psychological and/or behavioral ways and can be costly to the host organization in terms of decreased productivity and employee well-being. The present study adopts the Ehrlich et al. definition of favoritism with a caveat. Whether or the individual or group in question is objectively neglected or disadvantaged is not of concern; whether they perceive they are, as perceptions drive behavior, is.

The present study seeks to expand the current body of fairness literature by exploring the way situational characteristics affect employee perceptions of favoritism in

the workplace. Specifically, this study will examine how supervisor consistency in enforcing rules (inconsistent enforcement of rule, consistent enforcement of rule, and consistent disregard of rule) and the level of importance of the rule being enforced (low or high importance) individually affect and interact to affect employee perceptions of procedural and interpersonal justice and favoritism. Further, very little research exists that investigates the impact both situational and individual differences – specifically in personality – have on employees' perceptions of fairness and favoritism. The current study intends to explore these factors as well.

### **Equity Theory**

Contemporary fairness research and the present study share a foundation created by the Equity Theory (Adams, 1965). The concept outlines the human motivation to seek equitable transactions in which people will receive an outcome equal to or greater than the effort they put into the task at hand. Equity Theory holds that fairness is assessed according to a ratio of the outcome an individual receives over the individual's input (which is ideally  $\geq 1$ , indicating more outputs than inputs). The ratio is then compared to the ratio of an equivalent other (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). The composition of the ratio, and subsequent comparison, is typically the product of an individual's informal appraisal and can exist anywhere on the continuum of subjective to objective.

Overpayment can elicit feelings of guilt while underpayment can elicit feelings of resentment and anger (Adams, 1965). Where overpayment exists, individuals are unlikely to reject outcomes and may work harder to balance the ratio or, more commonly, do nothing at all. Whereas when underpayment exists, individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy between the effort they are expending and the repayment they are

receiving. Employees may react behaviorally (e.g., decreasing productivity or renegotiating outcomes) and/or cognitively (e.g., rationalizing outputs or adjusting self-set standards) in effort to remedy such inequities (Adams, 1965).

Favoritism, which can be a method of inequitable treatment, is defined as the “unfair favoring of one person or group at the expense of another” (Ehrlich, Flexner, Carruth, & Hawkins, 1980 pp. 315). Employee perceptions of favoritism in the workplace can have a direct (e.g., decrease in employee time spent working, decrease in employee energy expended) and/or indirect (e.g., “possibility of retaliation and loss of just[ice] reputation”) cost to the organization (Dogan & Vecchio, 2001, p. 60). The various risks to companies associated with employees’ perceptions of inequitable treatment underscore the need for organizational leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the causes of favoritism perceptions. Organizational justice literature can facilitate the development of that understanding.

### **Organizational Justice**

Organizational justice concerns individuals’ and groups’ perceptions of how fairly their organization treats them (James, 1993). Organizational justice and perceptions of fairness are considered in many areas of work including performance evaluations, layoffs, promotions, and compensation (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). Perceptions of organizational justice have been shown to affect employee behaviors (e.g., productivity, aggression), emotions (e.g., envy, sadness), and states (e.g., well-being, satisfaction) (James, 1993).

The origin of fairness research is accredited to the 1949 Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, and Williams study, as cited by Cropanzano and Randall (1993), in

which the scientists compared army air corps officers and military police employee satisfaction with their organizations' promotion practices. The soldiers' organizations' promotional practices differed in speed and frequency; army air force officers were promoted quickly and consistently while military police officers were promoted at a slower pace. To their surprise, the researchers found that military police were significantly more satisfied with their potential for promotion. This unexpected result was the inspiration for the term "relative deprivation" (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). People do not feel deprived objectively (meaning there is not a standard or benchmark for when a situation will elicit feelings of deprivation). Rather, the feeling of deprivation is relative to the comparison of oneself to a referent (equivalent other) in which the individual perceives they came up short. The referent can be a coworker, an expectation developed from experience, a standard set by society, or even a personal standard set by the individual (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). As long as an individual's outcome is not low in comparison to their referent the individual can maintain a moderate level of satisfaction (Lawler, 1971). Relative deprivation is the basis for a lot of social comparison research including the previously mentioned equity theory.

The organizational justice construct envelopes three, subconstructs: distributive, procedural, and interpersonal justice. Scholars do not agree on whether interpersonal justice, originally proposed by Bies and Moag (1986), is its own construct or a facet of procedural justice (Greenberg, 1993). The different dimensions of justice and the extent to which they exist in an organization can predict many outcomes including employee attitudes and behaviors. All three subconstructs are outlined below.

### ***Distributive Justice***

Distributive justice is defined as the fairness of an organization's allocation of resources both monetary and otherwise (e.g., materials, training, paid-time-off). Organizations may use what are called allocation rules to guide the distribution of resources (Cropanzano, 1993). Examples of common methods of distributing resources include distributing outcomes evenly (equality distribution), based on contribution (equity distribution), and based on individual necessity (need distribution; Deutsch, 1975; Greenberg, 1990a). The allocation rules listed above are not mutually exclusive as an organization or manager typically borrows from more than one rule to make decisions (Elliot & Meeker, 1986). The allocation rule(s) used will decide how fair employees consider their outcomes and the process that determined them.

### ***Procedural Justice***

Procedural justice is defined as, "the perceived fairness of how decisions are made, and outcomes are determined," in an organization (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). As explained by Thibaut and Walker, procedural justice is more concerned with "means" than it is "ends" (contrary to distributive justice). Leventhal (1980) outlined six criteria for fair procedures which are as follows: the information used to make decisions must be accurate, biases must be checked and accounted for, procedures must be consistently upheld, those affected should have the opportunity to appeal decisions, decisions should be ethically bound, and the process should involve the participation or input of all stakeholders. The effects of supervisory consistency on perceptions of favoritism are investigated in the present study. Research suggests that individuals are more likely to

accept an outcome if the allocation process is perceived as fair (Cropanzano, 1993). An employee's appraisal of the fairness of an organization's processes and protocols can greatly affect their work behaviors, emotions, and the quality of their work (Greenberg, 1993). Specifically, employees' perceptions of fair organizational procedures have been shown to affect the quality of their work, their trust in their supervisor, and their commitment to the organization at which they work (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Greenberg, 1993). The presence of fair procedures can decrease employee stress levels and increase their well-being (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017).

### ***Interpersonal Justice***

Interpersonal justice, also commonly referred to in the literature as interactional justice, is defined as the perceived fairness of the treatment of others when rules are enforced, procedures executed, and resources allocated (Bies, 2001). Judgments of procedural justice are partially influenced by interpersonal treatment (Tyler & Bies, 1990). Bies and Moag (1986) purported that interpersonal interactions are perceived as fair to the extent that they meet social standards of respect and propriety (i.e., appropriate, courteous, non-prejudicial language). Upon researching job applicants' perceptions of how fairly organizations treated them, Bies found four qualities of interpersonally fair procedures: truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions (appropriateness of question), and justification (of unfair outcomes). Beyond distributive and procedural justice, an employee's perceptions of the social appropriateness and respectfulness of those involved in making decisions in the workplace have an impact on how fairly they believe they were treated (Baron, 1990). The interpersonal context in which ends (distribution of outcomes) and means (procedure determining distribution) exist is vital to the

understanding of organizational justice and the employee perceptions of justice that develop (Baron, 1990).

### **Dependent Variables: Perceptions of Justice**

Procedural and interpersonal justice, more specifically employee perceptions surrounding the two, are of particular interest to the present study as they, in addition to perceptions of supervisor favoritism, comprise its dependent variables. According to Kurt Lewin, even if the individual's perception of events is inaccurate, it will drive their associated cognitive and behavioral responses because it is their view of reality (1936). Employee perceptions are particularly relevant to understanding how employees interact with their work environment. It is the employee's perception of inequity, not necessarily the objective presence of inequity, that drives undesired employee behaviors such as resignation, counterproductive work behaviors, and workplace aggression (Barclay & Aquino, 2011). Each of the three dependent variables, employee procedural justice perceptions, interpersonal justice perceptions, and perceptions of supervisor favoritism, are discussed briefly below.

Procedural justice perceptions affect several work- and employee-health-related outcomes. Employees' perceptions of fair treatment have been shown to directly influence their work behaviors and quality of work (Greenberg, 1993). Employees' perceptions of fair treatment have also been shown to negatively influence their stress levels and positively influence their well-being (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). As mentioned previously, procedures are carried out within an interpersonal context and employee judgments of procedural justice are significantly affected by judgments of interpersonal justice (Tyler & Bies, 1990). Acknowledgment of the effects social context

has on employee psychological well-being, specifically, the context that is created by supervisor-employee relations, is increasing. Around the 1980s, researchers began noticing that study participants often listed interactional factors (as compared to operational factors) when asked to describe unfair treatment (Greenberg, 1993). Whether interpersonal justice is a facet of procedural justice or its own subconstruct of organizational justice, it is clear it warrants measurement.

### ***Perceptions of Supervisor Favoritism***

Organizational politics, which encompasses favoritism, is defined as a behavior, exhibited by a group or an individual, that is informal, technically illegitimate, and usually has divisive effects (Adams et al., 2008; Mintzeberg, 1983). The conflict spurred by acts of favoritism and perceptions of unfair procedures, distribution, and treatment surrounding limited resources can rouse behaviors that distract or detract from the organization's goals and needs (Adams et al., 2008). Perceptions of favoritism and other unfair organizational events can be predicted by decreased opportunities for advancement (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Valle & Perrewe, 2000), formal conduct (Ferris, Frink, Galang et al., 1996), and interactions with co-workers and supervisors (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Baron, 1999 as cited by Adams et al., 2008).

Perceptions of procedural justice are often measured by the perceived consistency and accuracy of the procedures used to determine outcomes. Perceptions of interactional justice are often measured by perceptions of the extent to which an individual's treatment reflected dignity, respect, and sensitivity (Barclay & Aquino, 2011). The extent to which procedures and treatment are fair can affect the extent to which employees perceive that favoritism is present. Several studies investigate the effects situational differences have

on employee perceptions supervisor expressions of favoritism (e.g., Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Parker et al., 1995 as cited by Adams et al., 2008; Valle & Perrewe, 2000). However, few studies investigate the effects of individual differences on employee perceptions of favoritism (e.g., Adams et al., 2008; Zellars & Kacmar, 1999), and no studies (to the author's knowledge) investigate the effects of the situational differences simulated in the present study.

### **Independent Variables: Situational and Individual Differences**

The independent variables in this study are meant to capture a few of the endless situational and employee individual differences that exist and stand to affect perceptions of favoritism in the workplace. Two possible opportunities for situational variation are represented by the consistency of supervisor and level of rule importance variables. Employee individual differences and demographics will be analyzed in the form of covariates and include personality traits, gender, and experience.

#### ***Supervisor Consistency***

For the purposes of this study, supervisor consistency is operationally defined as the extent to which a supervisor enforces rules to the same standard across individuals and occasions. Study participants will be exposed to a scenario depicting a supervisor that is consistently lenient, consistently strict, or inconsistent in their enforcement of rules. As defined by the authors of this study, a consistently lenient supervisor does not enforce rules or hold employees to organizational standards and policies – but does so uniformly across individuals. A consistently strict supervisor enforces rules and holds employees to organizational standards and policies – and does so uniformly across individuals. An inconsistent supervisor enforces rules and holds employees to organizational standards

and policies unevenly across individuals or instances. There are several reasons a supervisor might behave inconsistently toward their employees including the natural desire to avoid cognitive exhaustion (ego-depletion theory), employee performance, and nepotistic motivations (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven & Tice, 1998).

### ***Level of Rule Importance***

Extant research on behavior within organizations has supported that situational factors serve as the primary determinants of employee behavior (e.g., Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1996; Tett & Burnett, 2003). Little to no research, to the researcher's knowledge, exists exploring the effect the level of importance of the rule in question has on the perception of favoritism. The present study will investigate the relationship between the importance of a rule and the perceptions that develop surrounding it. Two levels of rule importance will be explored, unimportant and important. Though the level of importance a rule possesses could be considered subjective, the researchers built the scenarios and the context surrounding a rule in a manner that aimed to minimize subjectivity.

This study will explore how supervisor consistency and the level of importance of the rule being enforced individually affect and interact to affect perceptions of favoritism and justice (procedural and interpersonal). The hypotheses being tested are:

#### **Main Effects:**

*H1:* There is a significant, negative relationship between supervisor consistency in rule enforcement and employees' perceptions of favoritism.

Supervisors who are consistent in their reaction to employee deviance from organization standards will stimulate fewer perceptions of favoritism than supervisors who are inconsistent in their reaction to employee deviant behavior. Supervisors who are inconsistent violate social norms and professional standards and inspire feelings of

inequity and deprivation in their subordinates through their variable treatment of employees.

*H1a:* Employees will perceive less favoritism if their supervisor is consistently strict than if their supervisor is consistently lenient.

Supervisors who consistently enforce organization policy (consistently strict) will stimulate the least employee perceptions of favoritism. The rationale supporting this prediction assumes that employees will be less likely to perceive favoritism because their supervisor interacts with them in the same way they interact with the employee's peers (equivalent other) and their behavior can be tied to a predictable set of rules. Supervisors who consistently decline to enforce organization policy (consistently lenient) will stimulate more employee perceptions of favoritism than consistently strict supervisors, but less than inconsistent supervisors. Similar to supervisors who are consistently strict, consistently lenient supervisors treat employees equally. According to the concept of relative deprivation, individuals feel deprived or cheated to the extent that an outcome is inequivalent to that of a referent or equivalent other (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). In the case of a consistently lenient supervisor, employees would be treated in the same manner as their equivalent others. However, an individual's referent could also be a standard, social norm, or expectation learned through experience (Cropanzano & Randall, 1993). A supervisor who fails to enforce organizational policy is failing to uphold certain standards. This could trigger feelings of injustice in an employee if it violates their expectancies as determined by their referent.

*H2:* There is a significant, negative relationship between rule importance and employee perceptions of favoritism.

Situations in which the rule in question is perceived as valuable and relevant to the employee (i.e., important), such as rule requiring the donning of a hardhat in a construction zone, will inspire the least perceptions of favoritism. Conversely, situations in which the rule in question is perceived as invaluable and irrelevant to the employees (i.e., unimportant), such as rules restricting tattoo visibility in a call center, will inspire the most perceptions of favoritism.

Interactions:

*H3*: There will be a significant interaction between the consistency of supervisor and rule importance in which they share an impact on perceptions of favoritism.

Consistently strict supervisors enforcing important rules will inspire the least employee perception of favoritism. Consistently strict supervisors enforcing unimportant rules will follow. There will not be a significant difference among consistently lenient supervisors enforcing either level of rule importance, however, employees will perceive significantly less favoritism under a consistently lenient supervisor than an inconsistent supervisor. An inconsistent supervisor “enforcing” an unimportant rule will inspire the least employee perceptions of favoritism after consistently lenient supervisors. Finally, inconsistent supervisors “enforcing” important rules will inspire the most employee perception of favoritism.

This study will also explore the following research question:

*RQ 1*: How will individual differences such as personality, rule orientation, positive and negative affectivity, belief in a just world, past supervisor experience, and gender affect employee perceptions of favoritism?

## CHAPTER II: METHODS

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a web-based crowdsourcing platform that facilitates the collection of data from a large pool of individuals. Participants received three U.S. dollars to compensate them for their participation in the study.

Approximately 238 individuals responded to the call for participants. Multiple criteria were employed to ensure that quality data was used in the study's analyses and the researchers upheld the informed consent and participant standards governed by the Middle Tennessee State University's Internal Review Board. Prospective participants were asked to indicate whether they read the consent document, whether the consent document was clear, whether they were at least 18 years of age, and whether they met the study's inclusion criteria in addition to providing informed consent. In total, 12 participants were dismissed during the briefing and consent process.

Next, participants were asked to indicate which ranges represented their age and years' work experience and whether they were U.S. citizens. Participants had to be 18 years or older, have at least one year of work experience, and be U.S. citizens to partake in the study. In total, 20 participants were dismissed when directly asked about the exclusion criteria. Thirteen participants' data were excluded from the analysis due to a questionnaire completion rate of less than 90%. Finally, data from 90 participants who did not pass one or more of the three attention checks were excluded from the analysis.

Of the original 238 participants, only 109 passed the various response quality and attention checks utilized in the cleaning of the data. Only the data that passed all

previously listed checks were included in the analysis. Of the participants whose data were used in the analysis ( $n = 109$ ), 58% were men and 42% were women. In terms of age, 3% of the participants fell within the 18-24 age range, 18% were 25-31, 26% were 32-38, 23% were 39-45, 10% were 46-52, 13% were 53-59, and 7% were 60 years or older. In terms of work experience, 3% of the participants had 1-3 years of work experience, 13% had 4-6 years' experience, 8% had 7-9 years' experience, and 76% had 10 or more years' experience.

## **Design**

The study employed a 3 (supervisory consistency: consistently strict, consistently lenient, inconsistent) x 2 (importance of rule: unimportant, important) two-way ANOVA design. Individual differences and demographics were analyzed as covariates.

## ***Individual Differences***

A key to understanding the effects of favoritism in the workplace is understanding how different individuals perceive and are affected by favoritism. A large portion of the variance in perception and reaction among individuals can be attributed to individual differences (Spector & Fox, 2002). Individual differences and demographics that have been studied for their relationships with favoritism in the workplace include workgroup membership (and that group's history, level of cohesion, and control over outcomes; Berns, 2004), personality traits (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, just-world beliefs, self-esteem, need for power, Machiavellism, self-monitoring, locus of control, etc.; Daskin, 2013; Phan, 2003; Valle & Perrew, 2000; Zellars & Kacmar, 1999), gender (DeStefano, 2007; Zellars & Kacmar, 1999), and age (Weeks, Weeks, & Long, 2016). The individual differences of interest to this study are personality, rule-orientation,

positive and negative affectivity, belief in a just world, past experiences with supervisors, and gender.

**Personality.** Personality traits influence the way individuals react to and perceive situations, including situations (seemingly) involving favoritism. The Big Five personality traits, also known as the five-factor model, dominate personality research and offer a well-rounded view of an individual. Over decades, several scientists have contributed to the statistical consolidation of the original 4,500 personality-related terms created by Allport & Odbert in 1936 (Soto & John, 2012). The traits are as follows: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Openness to experience concerns an individual's willingness to try new things and engage in creative activities (Soto & John, 2012). The present study utilized Goldberg's (1992) Big Five Factor Markers in which "imagination/intellect" are the terms used to classify items measuring one's openness to experience. Conscientiousness concerns an individual's level of self-discipline and tendency to engage in organized behavior (Soto & John, 2012). Extraversion concerns an individual's want and tendency to interact with their social environment (Soto & John, 2012). Agreeableness concerns how individuals approach their relationships with others (Soto & John, 2012). Finally, neuroticism, termed "emotional stability" in Goldberg's scale, concerns an individual's overall emotional steadiness (Goldberg, 1992; Soto & John, 2012).

Perceived favoritism is related to negative behaviors through its influence on negative emotions. The Big Five have also been found to relate to the expression of negative emotions and the engagement in negative behaviors. In Phan's (2003) thesis study, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, and perception of favoritism

were identified as predictors of negative emotions. Participants that were experiencing negative emotions and scored high on openness to experience were more likely to engage in negative behaviors while participants that scored high on agreeableness and conscientiousness were less likely to engage in negative behaviors (Phan, 2003).

Agreeableness and openness to experience have both been found to be related to negative emotions. However, openness to experience was found to be positively related to negative behavior while agreeableness was found to be negatively related to negative emotions. Meaning individuals who possess higher levels of agreeableness feel lower levels of negative emotions in response to perceptions of favoritism while those who possess higher levels of openness to experience feel higher levels of negative emotions in response to favoritism. Finally, conscientiousness was found to be negatively related to negative behavior as a response to favoritism (Phan, 2003).

**Rule-orientation.** A person's rule orientation describes the extent to which they believe breaking the rules is acceptable (Fine et al., 2016). People vary in their tendency to break the rules as well as under what conditions they perceive the violation of rules to be a reasonable response (Fine et al., 2016). For example, an individual might be inclined to break a rule that they do not understand, that their colleagues do not follow, or that they evaluate as against their moral principles (Fine, et al., 2016). Someone with a high rule orientation perceives fewer occasions in which breaking the rules is generally acceptable while someone with a low rule orientation perceives more occasions in which breaking the rules is generally an acceptable response (Fine et al., 2016). The present study will investigate the effect a person's level of rule orientation has on perceptions of favoritism.

**Positive and Negative Affectivity.** The concepts of positive and negative affectivity are used to describe an individual's emotional tendencies. Positive affectivity is characterized by an individual's tendency to experience positive emotional states across time and various contexts (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991; Watson & Clark, 1984). Positive emotional states are exhibited through behaviors that are considered enthusiastic, joyful, or socially responsive. Meanwhile, negative affectivity is characterized by an individual's stable tendency to experience negative emotional states across time and context. Negative emotional states are exhibited through behaviors that are considered hostile, upset, or timid. Positive and negative affectivity are not mutually exclusive. Because positive and negative affectivity are independent personality dimensions, an individual can measure high on a positive affectivity scale and high on a negative affectivity scale (George, 1992). An individual's affect can influence the way they experience and react to reality. For example, employees with higher levels of positive affect are less likely to experience burnout, more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction, and more likely to perceive they are supported (Iverson, Olekalns, & Erwin, 1998). While individuals with higher levels of negative affect are more likely to experience/perceive unpleasant events (Watson & Clark, 1984). Further, in direct relation to this study, individuals with high positive affect are less likely to attribute organizational decisions to politics or to perceive negative political behaviors are occurring at all (Adams, Treadway, & Stepina, 2008).

**Belief in a Just World.** Belief in a just world is defined as one's tendency to believe the world is a fair and right place (Lucas, Zhdanova, & Alexander, 2011). Humans benefit from this belief as it is thought to facilitate a structured and controlled

psychological perception of life (Lerner, 1980 as cited in Lucas et al., 2011).

Interestingly, research shows that an individual's beliefs about justice for oneself exist separately from their beliefs about justice for others (Lucas et. al., 2011). Different levels of both beliefs elicit different outcomes. For example, the belief that the world operates through fair processes (procedural justice) and doles out outcomes fairly (distributive justice) to oneself has been shown to predict psychological adjustment and well-being (Lucas et. al, 2001) and is correlated with higher life satisfaction, lower levels of depression, and higher perceptions of life purpose. However, the belief that the world operates unfairly concerning others has been shown to predict harsh social attitudes (Lucas et. al., 2011) such as negative sentiments towards socially disadvantaged individuals (e.g., immigrants, the ill, and those of lower socioeconomic statuses). These sentiments are developed as a means of rationalizing instances where injustices seemingly cannot be remedied through prosocial action (i.e., individuals lower their valuation of socially disadvantaged individuals so the unjust treatment of them feels more appropriate; Hafer & Begue, 2005).

**Past Experiences with Supervisors.** Due to a lack of ability to create a developed relational context between the participants and the supervisor in the scenarios, the present study asks participants about their experience with past supervisors, specifically experiences involving procedural and interpersonal justice. The aim is to examine whether past experiences with supervisors produce a lens that alters employees' perceptions of potentially unjust situations. Individuals who have been treated in a manner they perceive as unjust in the past may be more likely to perceive unjust treatment in new situations due to their frame of reference.

**Gender.** Gender is one of the most basic individual differences coworkers (may) have. Several studies investigated gender differences in perceptions of favoritism either primarily or secondarily (DeStefano, 2007; Zellars & Kacmar, 1999). According to previous research, women are more tolerant of unfair or inequitable exchanges than men (Zellars & Kacmar, 1999). This could be because they have more experience with being treated inequitably.

### **Materials**

This study utilized six scenarios with varying levels and combinations of supervisor consistency and rule importance. Additionally, to serve the investigation of the study's hypotheses employed questionnaires gauging the participants' perceptions of the scenario they were provided, individual differences (rule orientation, belief in a just world, experiences with past supervisors, personality, and positive and negative affect), and demographics. The six scenarios and questionnaire items are presented in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. Participants needed to use a device that provided them with internet access to partake in the study.

### **Measures**

This study used and adapted measures from existing literature. A list of the measures used, any changes made to original items, and the achieved reliabilities can be found in Appendix B. Participants were provided with at least one neutral response option (e.g., "Neither agree nor disagree", "Unsure") on every scale and were able to advance through or skip any or all the items without penalty.

**Rule Orientation.** Participant level of rule orientation was measured by five items adapted from Fine et al.'s 2016 measure. The five items were selected from the original scale's 12 items due to their ability to relate to the study's workplace focus with

minimal adaptation. For example, “It is acceptable to break a legal rule if you feel that this legal rule was made without representing you” was adapted to read “It acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if you feel the rule was made without representing you”. Appendix B displays the original and adapted versions of all items used to measure rule orientation. The five-item scale achieved a high reliability coefficient ( $\alpha = .90$ ). The instructions asked that participants indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements they were presented. Participants responded to the rule orientation questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

**Belief in a Just World.** Participant level of belief in a just world was measured by Rubin & Peplau’s 1975 20-item scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Eleven items address ideals that suggest just circumstances and 9 items, that were coded inversely, address ideals that suggest unjust circumstances. The items were adapted to maintain gender neutrality. For example, “Men who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack” was adapted to read “People who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack.” The instructions asked that participants indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements they were presented. Participants responded to the belief in a just world questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

**Experiences with Past Supervisors.** Participant perceptions of the level of fairness and procedurally just treatment extended to them by their previous supervisors were measured by items adapted from existing organizational justice scales (e.g., PFIT, 1998). The entire scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ), favoritism subscale ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and procedural justice

subscale ( $\alpha = .92$ ) all achieved satisfactory reliability coefficients. The instructions asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements they were presented. Participants responded to the experience with past supervisors questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*); two of the items measuring past supervisor exhibition of favoritism were reverse coded.

**Perceptions of Justice and Favoritism.** Participant perceptions of procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and favoritism were assessed by six items adapted from existing organizational justice scales (Bies & Moag, 1986; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975 as cited by Colquitt 2001; Moorman, 1991). Four additional items were developed to offer specificity in addressing aspects of the scenarios. This scale, measuring overall perceptions of favoritism and injustice was comprised of four sub scales. Four sub-scales comprised the overall favoritism/injustice scale. The perceptions of justice and favoritism scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ) was comprised of ten items with possible scores ranging from 0 to 70. The procedural justice sub-scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ) was comprised of four items with possible scores ranging from 0 to 28. The interactional justice sub-scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ) was comprised of three items with possible scores ranging from 0 to 21. The global fairness scale ( $\alpha = .63$ ) was comprised of two items with possible scores ranging from 0 to 14, and one item measured favoritism with possible scores ranging from 0 to 7. Each of these scales was used as the dependent variable in separate analyses. The instructions asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements they were provided. Participants responded to the perceptions of justice and favoritism questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*). For each of these scales and the overall scale, the higher the score the fairer and

more just the participant perceived the scenario to be, the lower the score the more unfair and unjust the participant perceived the scenario to be.

**Personality.** Aspects of participant personality were measured by Goldberg's 1992 Big-Five Factor Markers. The extraversion scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) consisted of ten items, five of which depicted tendencies of individuals with low extraversion and were coded inversely. The agreeableness scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ) consisted of ten items, four of which depicted tendencies of individuals with low agreeableness and were coded inversely. The conscientiousness scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ) consisted of ten items, four of which depicted tendencies of individuals with low conscientiousness and were coded inversely. The emotional stability scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ) consisted of ten items, two of which depicted tendencies of individuals with high emotional stability and were coded inversely. The imagination/intellect scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ) consisted of ten items, three of which depicted tendencies of individuals with low imagination/intellect and were coded inversely. The instructions asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed that the provided statements describe them. Participants responded to the personality questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Disagree*, 5 = *Agree*).

**Positive and Negative Affect.** Participant levels of trait positive and negative affectivity were measured by Watson and Clark's 1994 *PANAS-X*. Specifically, the questionnaire utilized the 10-item general positive affectivity scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and 10-item general negative affectivity scale ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The original items were maintained in their entirety. Participants responded to the PANAS questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale indicating the extent to which they experience the feelings and emotions in general (1 = *Very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *Extremely*).

**Attention Checks.** The study used three items to evaluate the quality of participants' responses. Participants were asked to select the single response option that listed the focus of the rule in the scenario they were provided. Thirteen or approximately 5% of participants did not pass this attention check. An item that read "It is acceptable for your dog to make rules for you to follow in the workplace" was nested within the rule orientation scale. Participants had to respond using the negative or neutral response option (i.e., *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree*, *Somewhat disagree*, or *Neither agree nor disagree*) to pass this attention check. Sixty or approximately 25% of participants did not pass this attention check. In addition, the color turquoise was inserted into the list of feelings and emotions in the PANAS. Participants had to respond using the *Very slightly or not at all* response option to pass this attention check. Eighty-one or approximately 34% of participants did not pass this attention check.

**Manipulation Checks.** The study used 2 items to evaluate the manipulation of the independent variables. After reading the scenario, participants were asked, "How important do you perceive the 'no earphones rule' to be?" and were able to respond on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *Extremely unimportant*, 5 = *Extremely important*). Participants were then asked, "Which of the following describes the supervisor depicted in the scenario?" to which they could respond "Consistently strict," "Consistently lenient," or "Inconsistent," or indicate that they were "Unsure." See *Table 5* for mean participant ratings of supervisor consistency and rule importance for each scenario.

A full list of scales and items included in the questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.

## **Procedure**

The administration of the study occurred virtually via Qualtrics. Participants were able to sign up for the study by interacting with a description of the survey on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The description, included in Appendix F, contained the purpose of the survey, a brief statement of what would be asked of the participants, participant inclusion criteria, and the compensation for completing the survey. Those who expressed interest in participating were provided a link to the Qualtrics survey. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, the survey procedures, IRB details, contact information, details surrounding compensation, exclusion criteria, and a statement of confidentiality.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they read the informed consent information provided, the information provided was clear, meet the qualifications of the study, and are 18 years or older. Barring a negative response to any of the four questions, the participants were asked to consent to participate in the study. If a participant declined to consent to participate in the study, they were thanked for their time and interest and dismissed from the study.

Following the participants' consent, they were provided with screening questions regarding their level of work experience, age, and U.S. citizenship. Participants who did not meet one or more of the criteria according to their responses to the screening questions were thanked for their time and interest and dismissed from the study. The remaining participants were asked to answer rule orientation and belief-in-a-just-world questionnaires to log some of their dispositions. Additionally, participants were asked to respond to questions about their experiences with past supervisors.

Participants were randomly assigned one of six scenarios and asked to envision themselves as the employee depicted. Following their reading of the scenario, participants were asked to answer questions to gauge their perceptions of just treatment and favoritism in reaction to the scenario and personality and affectivity questionnaires. Finally, participants were asked to indicate their gender, and the ranges holding their age and years of work experience. Upon completion, the participants were thanked for their participation, debriefed, and dismissed.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and frequency counts were calculated for participant demographic items. The study's hypotheses and research question were investigated using a series of descriptive statistics, one-way and two-way between-subjects ANOVAs, Tukey's post-hoc multiple comparisons, and multiple regression. The results of the analyses were combined to determine the effects of situational and individual differences on perceptions of favoritism in the workplace. The findings are presented by the four dependent variable sub-scales as well as by the aggregated perceptions of favoritism and injustice scale.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant, negative relationship between supervisor consistency in rule enforcement and employees' perceptions of favoritism.

Hypothesis 1a: Employees will perceive less favoritism if their supervisor is consistently strict than if their supervisor is consistently lenient.

Hypotheses 1 and 1a were tested using a one-way between-subjects ANOVA with Tukey's post-hoc multiple comparisons when appropriate. The main effect of supervisor consistency was a significant predictor of procedural justice ( $F(2, 106) = 3.10, p = .049$ ) and interpersonal justice perceptions,  $F(2, 106) = 3.56, p = .03$ . Participants assigned inconsistent supervisors ( $M = 13.31, SD = 4.89$ ) reported significantly higher perceptions of procedural injustice than did participants assigned consistent supervisors ( $M = 16.47, SD = 6.32$ ). Participants assigned inconsistent supervisors ( $M = 9.42, SD = 4.47$ ) reported significantly higher perceptions of interactional injustice than did participants assigned consistently lenient ( $M = 12.33, SD = 5.00$ ). See Table 1 for means.

The main effect of supervisor consistency was not a significant predictor of perceptions of global fairness ( $F(2, 106) = 1.59, p = .21$ ), perceptions of favoritism ( $F(2,$

106) = 1.07,  $p = .35$ ), or overall perceptions of favoritism/injustice,  $F(2, 106) = 2.71$ ,  $p = .07$ . Given this, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported and Hypothesis 1a was not supported. See Table 2 for means.

**Table 1.**

*Means and standard deviations for procedural justice and interactional justice perceptions by supervisor consistency*

Supervisor Consistency	Procedural Justice		Interactional Justice	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Inconsistent	13.31	4.89	9.42	4.47
Consistently Lenient	15.31	4.96	12.33	5.00
Consistently Strict	16.47	6.32	11.15	4.74

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

**Table 2.**

*Means and standard deviations for global fairness perceptions, perceptions of favoritism, and overall favoritism/injustice perceptions by supervisor consistency*

Supervisor Consistency	Global Fairness		Favoritism		Overall Favoritism/Injustice	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Inconsistent	7.86	2.62	5.36	1.18	35.94	10.44
Consistently Lenient	8.03	3.18	4.90	1.64	40.56	10.94
Consistently Strict	9.00	2.80	5.06	1.61	41.56	11.22

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant, negative relationship between rule importance and employee perceptions of favoritism.

Hypothesis 2 was tested using a one-way between subjects ANOVA. The main effect of rule importance was not a significant predictor of perceptions of procedural justice ( $F(2, 106) = 0.02$ ,  $p = .88$ ), perceptions of interactional justice ( $F(2, 106) = 3.67$ ,  $p = .06$ ), global fairness perceptions ( $F(2, 106) = 1.33$ ,  $p = .25$ ), perceptions of favoritism

( $F(2, 106) < 0.01$ ,  $p = .96$ ), or overall favoritism/injustice perceptions, ( $F(2, 106) = 1.11$ ,  $p = .30$ ). Hypothesis 2 was not supported. See Tables 3 and 4 for means.

It should be mentioned that though the researchers intended to randomly assign participants to scenarios that depicted either an important or unimportant rule, participant perception of rule importance appeared to be dependent upon the consistency of the supervisor and/or the scenario's outcome. Despite the prescribed level of rule importance, the participants might not have perceived the rule as was intended. See Table 5 for the means of the independent variable manipulation checks.

**Table 3.**

*Means and standard deviations for procedural justice and interactional justice perceptions by rule importance*

Rule Importance	Procedural Justice		Interactional Justice	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Important	14.92	5.37	11.91	4.37
Unimportant	15.09	5.67	10.14	5.18

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

**Table 4.**

*Means and standard deviations for global fairness perceptions, perceptions of favoritism, and overall favoritism/injustice perceptions by rule importance*

Rule Importance	Global Fairness		Favoritism		Overall Favoritism/Injustice	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Important	8.60	2.88	5.06	1.35	40.49	10.89
Unimportant	7.96	2.92	5.07	1.63	38.27	11.17

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

**Table 5.**

***Means and standard deviations of participant ratings of scenario supervisor consistency and rule importance.***

Condition	<i>Supervisor Consistency</i>		<i>Rule Importance</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Scenario 1 (Consistently Strict x Important)	2.47	1.13	4.40	0.74
Scenario 2 (Consistently Lenient x Important)	1.77	0.53	4.14	1.04
Scenario 3 (Inconsistent x Important)	1.07	0.26	4.40	0.74
Scenario 4 (Consistently Strict x Unimportant)	2.89	0.46	3.05	1.13
Scenario 5 (Consistently Lenient x Unimportant)	1.76	0.44	3.41	1.33
Scenario 6 (Inconsistent x Unimportant)	1.19	0.51	3.05	1.40

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

*Note: Intended rating for consistently strict supervisors = 3.00, consistently lenient supervisors = 2.00, inconsistent supervisors = 1.00.*

*Intended rating for important rules = 4.00, unimportant rules = 2.00*

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant interaction between consistency of supervisor and rule importance in which they share an impact on perceptions of favoritism.

Hypothesis 3 was tested using a two-way between subjects ANOVA. There was a statically significant interaction between the effects of supervisor consistency and rule importance on perceptions of favoritism,  $F(2, 103) = 3.67, p = .03$ . The interaction was non-significant for perceptions of procedural justice ( $F(2, 103) = 1.66, p = .20$ ), perceptions of interactional justice ( $F(2, 103) = 0.618, p = .54$ ), global fairness perceptions ( $F(2, 103) = 1.97, p = .14$ ), and overall favoritism/injustice perceptions,  $F(2, 103) = 0.961, p = .39$ . See Table 6 for means.

**Table 6.**

***Means and standard deviations for perceptions of favoritism by supervisor consistency and rule importance***

Supervisor Consistency	Rule Importance			
	<i>Important</i>		<i>Unimportant</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Inconsistent	4.80	1.21	5.76	1.00
Consistently Lenient	4.96	1.42	4.81	1.87
Consistently Strict	5.47	1.25	4.53	1.78

*M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

Research Question 1: How will individual differences such as rule orientation, belief in a just world, past supervisor experience, personality, positive and negative affectivity, and gender affect employee perceptions of favoritism?

The study's research question was tested using multiple regression. When the individual differences were entered simultaneously in a single step, the analysis indicated that rule orientation, belief in a just world, past supervisor experience, personality, positive and negative affectivity, and gender explained 15% of the variance observed in perceptions of procedural justice. However, the overall model was not significant,  $F(12, 96) = 1.44, p = .16$ . Rule orientation ( $p = .02$ ), emotional stability ( $p < .01$ ), and negative affect ( $p = .02$ ) were significant predictors of perceptions of procedural justice. While approximately 16% of the variance observed in favoritism perceptions was explained by the individual differences investigated, the overall model was not significant,  $F(12, 96) = 1.50, p = .14$ . Rule orientation ( $p < .01$ ) and belief in a just world ( $p = .05$ ) were significant predictors of perceptions of favoritism. Finally, the individual differences investigated accounted for 12% of the variance observed in overall perceptions of favoritism and injustice. However, again the overall model was not

significant,  $F(12, 96) = 1.07, p = .39$ . Emotional stability ( $p = .03$ ) was the only significant individual difference predictor of overall perceptions of favoritism and injustice.

Meaning, the higher an individual's score on the rule orientation measure, indicative of a strong rule orientation, the less likely they were to perceive procedural injustice or favoritism occurred in the scenario they were randomly assigned. The higher an individual scored on the emotional stability measure, indicative of being more emotionally stable, the less likely they were to perceive procedural injustice. The higher an individual scored on the belief in a just world measure, indicative of the belief that the world operates in a just manner, the less likely they were to perceive favoritism occurred. Finally, the lower an individual scored on the negative affect measure, indicative of low negative affect, the less likely they were to perceive procedural injustice. While these relationships were present, the overall regression model was not significant in the case of all five dependent variables. Given this, the results discussed above should be interpreted with caution. Regression coefficients all variables use for procedural justice, favoritism, and overall favoritism and injustice perceptions predictive models can be found in Appendix C.

None of the individual differences were significant predictors of perceptions of interactional justice or global fairness perceptions. A correlation table of the study's individual differences and demographics variables can be found in Appendix D.

## CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to expand the body of favoritism literature by investigating the relationship between situational differences and perceptions of favoritism. The study tested the influence of supervisor consistency and rule importance on employee perceptions of favoritism. Specifically, the study hypothesized that consistent supervisors would inspire lower perceptions of favoritism in their subordinates, important rules would inspire lower perceptions of favoritism, and together, supervisor consistency and rule importance would influence employee perceptions of favoritism. Two of the three hypotheses were partially supported by the study's research. It was found that supervisor consistency significantly influenced perceptions of procedural and interactional justice, and that supervisor consistency and rule importance interacted to influence perceptions of favoritism.

Additionally, the study sought to investigate the impact several individual differences have on perceptions of favoritism. Rule orientation, belief in a just world, past experiences with supervisors, personality, positive and negative affect, and gender were examined for their possible relationships with employee perceptions of favoritism. The researchers found that rule orientation was a significant predictor of perceptions of procedural justice and favoritism, belief in a just world was a significant predictor of perceptions of favoritism, emotional stability was a significant predictor of procedural justice and overall favoritism and injustice perceptions, and negative affect was a significant predictor of perceptions of procedural justice. This finding indicates that individuals with higher rule orientations, belief in a just world, and emotional stability and lower negative affect are less likely to perceive injustice or favoritism in the

workplace than their counterparts. As mentioned previously, the overall predictive models for all 5 dependent variables were not significant. The results related to the impact individual differences have on perceptions of favoritism and injustice should be interpreted with caution.

### **Practical Implications**

The perceived existence of favoritism can affect employee emotions, feelings/states, behaviors, and perceptions of organizational justice. These outcomes can have effects on employee health and well-being, ability to work cohesively with others, and proneness to engaging in workplace violence.

Research shows that favoritism practices may lead to employee emotions such as envy and depression; feelings of demoralization, stress, or neglect; and behaviors such as presenteeism, retaliation, withdrawal, and turnover (Daskin, 2013; Phan, 2003). The presence of favoritism in the workplace also influences employee perceptions of organizational justice which in turn influences employee attitudes and behaviors (Berns, 2004; Phan, 2003). Workplace favoritism has been shown to have a significant positive affect on employees' perceptions of organizational politics and job stress (Daskin, 2013). As a supervisor or organization's exhibition of favoritism increases (or is perceived to increase) perceptions of organizational politics and job stress increase as well.

Teamwork and collaborative effort are becoming more and more essential to the success of organizations. Favoritism in the workplace can obstruct group effectiveness and cohesion and elicit negative emotions from those who are directly disadvantaged and those who observe the injustice and are indirectly affected (Weeks et. al, 2016).

Finally, fairness, or more specifically (employee perception of) lack of fairness, in the workplace is listed as a crucial predictor, to workplace aggression and violence (Barclay & Aquino, 2011). Workplace aggression and violence can be costly to organizations in terms of legal costs, employee well-being, and loss of reputation.

The present study's findings, could provide managers and employees with insight into the effect situational occurrences, specifically rule importance and supervisor consistency, have on employee perceptions of favoritism. Insight on these matters may help employers and supervisors mitigate the negative outcomes associated with perceived favoritism and injustice in the workplace.

### **Limitations**

The present study had several limitations including sample size, the extreme reduction of sample size through data cleaning, difficulty manipulating the independent variables, and variation in rule importance.

Though the researchers achieved their goal of at least 15 participants per condition, a larger sample size would have benefited the study and analysis. The sample size was greatly reduced by the attention checks that were employed, two of which may not have effectively measure attention (e.g., the item "turquoise" could have been interpreted as "feeling blue" – a common expression of sadness – on the PANAS) and led to the exclusion of half of the collected data.

One of the study's major limitations was the unsuccessful manipulation of the independent variables. Participant's perceptions of rule importance were closely tied to the outcome of the scenario they were given. When the employee in the scenario was reprimanded or disciplined, study participants tended to perceive the rule in the scenario

as important regardless of the researchers' intent. The outcome of the scenario was partially dependent upon the decided consistency of the supervisor. If the supervisor was consistently strict, the employee in the scenario was disciplined and the participants perceived the rule as important. Conversely, if the supervisor was consistently lenient, the employee in the scenario was not disciplined and the participants perceived the rule as unimportant. In attempt to remedy this issue, the scenario was presented in segments followed by the manipulation check item most relevant to that segment.

### **Conclusion**

The current study accomplished its intended purpose of expanding the current body of fairness research by exploring the ways supervisor consistency and rule importance affect employee perceptions of favoritism and [in]justice in the workplace. Additionally, this study investigated the impact of various individual differences on favoritism and [in]justice perceptions. Though these specific areas of foci have been largely unexplored to date, extant research organizational justice and favoritism, as well as well-established theories such as equity theory, provide the foundation for future investigation and the expanse of our understanding of the antecedents and contributors to perceptions of favoritism in and outside of the workplace.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: SCENARIOS

### Scenario Guide

		Supervisor Consistency		
		Consistently Strict	Consistently Lenient	Inconsistent
Rule Importance	Important	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
	Unimportant	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6

### Scenario 1

(Rule Type: Important – Safety, Manager Type: Consistently Strict)

#### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a forklift driver for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been with Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you are not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music because the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) prohibits listening to music while operating heavy machinery.

Your manager is a stickler for the rules. You have never seen them allow a forklift driver to wear earphones on the job and no one would dare try. One day you see several forklift drivers wearing headphones. You wonder if the ban on earphones has been lifted. You run to your locker and grab your earphones. You put them on and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They call you to their office. When you arrive, they write you up for wearing earphones while operating a forklift and send you home for the day.

## Scenario 2

(Rule Type: Important – Safety, Manager Type: Consistently Lenient)

### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a forklift driver for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been with Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you are not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music because the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) prohibits listening to music while operating heavy machinery.

Your manager is pretty relaxed with the rules. A lot of forklift drivers tend to wear earphones on their shifts. You don't typically wear your earphones at work but one day, work is dragging so you decide to use them. You put your earphones on and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They ask that you follow them to their office. When you arrive, they give you a verbal warning and remind you that the punishment for using earphones while operating a forklift is usually a write-up.

## Scenario 3

(Rule Type: Important – Safety, Manager Type: Inconsistent)

### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a forklift driver for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been with Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you are not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music because the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) prohibits listening to music while operating heavy machinery.

Sometimes your manager gets on to employees that try to listen to earphones, and other times they let it slide. One day, work is dragging so you decide to try your luck. You're confident it won't be an issue because plenty of people are wearing earphones today. You put your earphones in and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They demand that you follow them to their office, so you do, passing at least a dozen other employees wearing earphones on the way. When you arrive, they write you up for wearing earphones while operating a forklift and send you home for the day.

## Scenario 4

(Rule Type: Unimportant, Manager Type: Consistently Strict)

### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a sorter for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been with Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you're not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music while on the job. Nile employees are not allowed to wear headphones and management has never explained why. This frustrates a lot of sorters because the shifts are long, and the work can be repetitive. Being able to listen to music would make everything better.

Your manager is a stickler for the rules even though they were a sorter once and have voiced their opinion that sorters should be allowed to listen to music. You have never seen them allow an employee in any position to wear earphones on the job and no one would dare try. One day you see several sorters wearing earphones. You wonder if the ban on earphones has been lifted. You run to your locker and grab your earphones. You put your earphones on and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They call you into their office. When you arrive, they write you up for failing to follow company policy and send you home for the day.

## Scenario 5

(Rule Type: Unimportant, Manager Type: Consistently Lenient)

### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a sorter for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you're not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music while on the job. Nile employees are not allowed to wear headphones and management has never explained why. This frustrates a lot of sorters because the shifts are long, and the work can be repetitive. Being able to listen to music would make everything better.

Your manager is pretty relaxed with the rules. Employees tend to wear earphones on their shifts. They were a sorter once and have voiced their opinion that sorters not being able to listen to music is ridiculous. You don't typically wear your earphones, but work is dragging today, so you decide to use them. You put your earphones in and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They demand that you follow them to their office, so you do, passing at least a dozen other employees wearing earphones on the way. When you arrive, they write you up for failing to follow company policy and send you home for the day.

## Scenario 6

(Rule Type: Unimportant, Manager Type: Inconsistent)

### Instructions

Read the scenario below and envision yourself as the employee within the company.

Imagine you are an employee at an order fulfillment center called Nile. It works like this: customers are able to order a wide variety of products online, your company packs and ships the items, and customers receive the items within 36 hours. You work in a warehouse with over 100 other employees doing various jobs. You have been working at Nile as a sorter for almost two years.

You enjoy your coworkers and since you have been with Nile for over 18 months your hourly rate is up to 18 dollars an hour! The only real downside of the job is that you're not allowed to wear earphones and listen to music while on the job. Nile employees are not allowed to wear headphones and management has never explained why. This frustrates a lot of sorters because the shifts are long, and the work can be repetitive. Being able to listen to music would make everything better.

Sometimes your manager gets on to employees that try to listen to earphones, and other times they let it slide. They were a sorter once and have voiced their opinion that sorters not being able to listen to music is ridiculous. One day, work is dragging so you decide to try your luck. You're confident it won't be an issue because plenty of people are wearing earphones today. You put your earphones on and ten seconds into the first song you hear your manager shouting. They demand that you follow them to their office, so you do, passing at least a dozen other employees wearing earphones on the way. When you arrive, they write you up for failing to follow company policy and send you home for the day.

APPENDIX B: MEASURES, ATTENTION CHECKS, AND MANIPULATION CHECKS

<b>Pre-Scenario Measures</b>				
<b>Individual Differences</b>				
<b><i>Rule Orientation</i></b>				
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
“It is acceptable to break a legal rule if you feel that this legal rule was made without representing you”	It is acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if you feel the rule was made without representing you	Rule Orientation	Fine et al., 2016	.90
“It is acceptable to break a legal rule if you think this legal rule is enforced unfairly”	It is acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if you feel the rule is enforced unfairly	Rule Orientation	Fine et al., 2016	
“It is acceptable to break a legal rule if you do not understand this legal rule”	It is acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if you do not understand the rule	Rule Orientation	Fine et al., 2016	
“It is acceptable to break a legal rule if most of your direct colleagues/friends also break this legal rule”	It is acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if most of your direct colleagues/friends also break this rule	Rule Orientation	Fine et al., 2016	
“It is acceptable to break a legal rule if this legal rule is not enforced”	It is acceptable to break a rule in the workplace if the rule is not enforced	Rule Orientation	Fine et al., 2016	
It is acceptable for your dog to make rules for you to follow in the workplace		Attention Check	Created	
<b><i>Belief in a Just World</i></b>				
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
“Basically, the world is a just place.”	Original item maintained	Belief in a Just World (BJW)/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	.87
“People who get ‘lucky breaks’ have usually earned their good fortune.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“[People] who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack.”	Adapted to make pronouns gender neutral	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	

Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
“It is rare for an innocent [person] to be wrongly sent to jail”	Adapted to make pronouns gender neutral	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	.87
“By and large, people deserve what they get.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“When parents punish their children, it is almost always for good reason.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Although evil [people] may hold political power for a while, in the general course of history good wins out.”	Adapted to make pronouns gender neutral	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“In almost any business or profession, people who do their job will rise to the top.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“People who meet with misfortune have often brought it on themselves.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Crime doesn’t pay.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Just Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“I’ve found that people rarely deserve the reputation [they] have.”	Adapted to make pronouns gender neutral	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Careful drivers are just as likely to get hurt in traffic accidents as careless ones.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“It is a common occurrence for a guilt person to get off free in American courts.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“The political candidate who sticks up for [their] principles rarely get elected.”	Adapted to make pronouns gender neutral	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“In professional sports, many fouls and infractions never get called by the referee.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	

Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
“American parents tend to overlook the things to be admired in their children.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	.87
“It is often impossible for a person to receive a fair trial in the USA.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
“Many people suffer through absolutely no fault of their own.”	Original item maintained	BJW/ Unjust Subscale	Rubin & Peplau, 1975	
<b><i>Experience with Supervisors</i></b>				$\alpha$
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	
“To what extent do you feel employees are treated with respect”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors treated employees with respect?	Adapted from Perceptions of Fair Interpersonal Treatment (PFIT)	Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998	.93
“To what extent do you feel supervisors play favorites”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors played favorites?	Adapted from PFIT	Donovan et. al., 1998	
“To what extent do you feel employees’ hard work is appreciated”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors have appreciated your hard work?	Adapted from PFIT	Donovan et. al., 1998	
“To what extent do you feel employees’ suggestions are ignored”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors ignored employees’ suggestions?	Adapted from PFIT	Donovan et. al., 1998	
“To what extent have those procedures been free of bias?”	To what extent do you feel the procedures applied by your past supervisors been free of bias?	Adapted from Procedural Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Leventhal, 1980)	
“To what extent have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors allowed employees to express their views and feelings during organizational procedures?	Adapted from Procedural Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Thibaut & Walker, 1975)	
“My manager suppresses personal biases”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors were able to suppress personal biases?	Adapted from Interactional Justice Scale	Moorman, 1991	
“My manager treats me with kindness and consideration”	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors have treated employees with kindness and consideration?	Adapted from Interactional Justice Scale	Moorman, 1991	

Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
"My manager considers my viewpoint"	To what extent do you feel your past supervisors have considered your point of view?	Adapted from Interactional Justice Scale	Moorman, 1991	.87
<b>Post-Scenario Measures</b>				
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
Scale Points	Item	Scale	Author	
Consistent, moderately consistent, inconsistent	How consistent do you believe the supervisor in the scenario to be?	Manipulation Check: Supervisor Consistency	Created	
Important, moderately important, unimportant	How important do you believe the no-earphone rule to be?	Manipulation Check: Rule Importance	Created	
<b>Justice (Dependent Variables)</b>				
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
"To what extent have those procedures been based on accurate information?"	To what extent do you feel your being written up was based on accurate information?	Adapted from Procedural Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Leventhal, 1980)	.84
"To what extent have those procedures been applied consistently?"	To what extent do you feel procedures were applied consistently?	Adapted from Procedural Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Leventhal, 1980)	
"To what extent have you had influence over the outcome arrived at by those procedures?"	To what extent do you feel you had influence over the being written up?	Adapted from Procedural Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Thibaut & Walker, 1975)	
To what extent do you feel the process of getting suspended was fair?		Assessing procedural justice perceptions	Created	
"To what extent have they treated you with respect?"	To what extent do you feel you were treated with respect?	Adapted from Interactional Justice Scale	Colquitt, 2001 (Bies and Moag, 1986)	

Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
"My supervisor takes steps to deal with me in a truthful manner"	To what extent do you feel steps were taken to deal with you in an appropriate manner?	Adapted from Interactional Justice Scale	Moorman, 1991	.84
To what extent do you feel you were treated appropriately?		Assessing interactional justice perceptions	Created	
To what extent do you think you have been treated fairly?		Assessing global fairness perceptions	Created	
To what extent do you feel you should have been written up for failing to follow company policy?		Assessing global fairness perceptions	Created	
To what extent do you feel the supervisor in the scenario exhibited favoritism?		Assessing favoritism perceptions	Created	
<b>Individual Differences</b>				
<i>Personality</i>				
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Authors	$\alpha$
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am the life of the party.</li> <li>- Feel comfortable around people.</li> <li>- Start conversations.</li> <li>- Talk to a lot of different people at parties.</li> <li>- Don't mind being the center of attention.</li> <li>- Don't talk a lot.</li> <li>- Keep in the background.</li> <li>- Have little to say.</li> <li>- Don't like to draw attention to myself.</li> <li>- Am quiet around strangers.</li> </ul>	Original items maintained	Personality Big-Five Factor Markers <b>Extraversion</b>	Goldberg, 1992	.87
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am interested in people.</li> <li>- Sympathize with others' feelings.</li> <li>- Have a soft heart.</li> <li>- Take time out for others.</li> </ul>	Original items maintained	Personality Big-Five Factor Markers <b>Agreeableness</b>	Goldberg, 1992	.82

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feel others' emotions.</li> <li>- Make people feel at ease.</li> <li>- Am not really interested in others.</li> <li>- Insult people.</li> <li>- Am not interested in other people's problems.</li> <li>- Feel little concern for others.</li> </ul>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am always prepared.</li> <li>- Pay attention to details.</li> <li>- Get chores done right away.</li> <li>- Like order.</li> <li>- Follow a schedule.</li> <li>- I am exacting in my work.</li> <li>- Leave my belongings around.</li> <li>- Make a mess of things.</li> <li>- Often forget to put things back in their proper place.</li> <li>- Shirk my duties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid my duties</li> </ul>	Personality Big-Five Factor Markers <b>Conscientiousness</b>	Goldberg, 1992	.79
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am relaxed most of the time.</li> <li>- Seldom feel blue.</li> <li>- Get stressed out easily.</li> <li>- Worry about things.</li> <li>- Am easily disturbed.</li> <li>- Get upset easily.</li> <li>- Change my mood a lot.</li> <li>- Have frequent mood swings.</li> <li>- Get irritated easily.</li> <li>- Often feel blue.</li> </ul>	Original items maintained	Personality Big-Five Factor Markers <b>Emotional Stability</b>	Goldberg, 1992	.86
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have a rich vocabulary.</li> <li>- Have a vivid imagination.</li> </ul>	Original items maintained	Personality Big-Five Factor Markers <b>Imagination/Intellect</b>	Goldberg, 1992	.84

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have excellent ideas.</li> <li>- Am quick to understand things.</li> <li>- Use difficult words.</li> </ul> <p>Spend time reflecting on things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Am full of ideas.</li> <li>- Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.</li> <li>- Am not interested in abstract ideas.</li> <li>- Do not have a good imagination.</li> </ul>				
<b><i>Positive and Negative Affectivity</i></b>				
Original Item	Adaptation	Scale	Author	$\alpha$
<p>To what extent have you felt this way in general?</p> <p>Active, alert, attentive, enthusiastic, excited, inspired, interested, proud, strong, determined</p>	Original items maintained	PANAS-X General Positive Affect	PANAS-X General Positive Affect	.93
<p>To what extent have you felt this way in general?</p> <p>Afraid, scared, nervous, jittery, guilty, ashamed, irritable, hostile, upset, distressed</p>	Original items maintained	PANAS-X General Negative Affect	PANAS-X General Negative Affect	.95

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES PREDICTIVE MODELS  
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Rule orientation</i>	.22	.09	.25	2.37	.02
<i>Emotional stability</i>	.25	.08	.47	2.95	.04
<i>Negative affect</i>	-.28	.12	-.35	-2.40	.02
<i>Belief in a just world</i>	.04	.04	.13	1.15	.25
<i>Past supervisor experience</i>	.08	.18	.08	.43	.67
<i>Positive Affect</i>	.07	.08	.11	.86	.39
<i>Extraversion</i>	.03	.07	.07	.50	.62
<i>Agreeableness</i>	-.05	.07	-.07	-.65	.52
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	.06	.09	.08	.69	.49
<i>Imagination/Intellect</i>	.12	.10.	.14	1.26	.21

*Table 7. Coefficients for perceptions of procedural justice predictive model variables*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Rule orientation</i>	-.07	.03	-.29	-2.73	<.01
<i>Emotional stability</i>	-.02	.02	-.11	-.68	.50
<i>Negative affect</i>	.05	.03	.24	1.65	.10
<i>Belief in a just world</i>	-.02	.01	-.22	-1.95	.05
<i>Past supervisor experience</i>	<.01	.05	-<.01	-.01	1.00
<i>Positive Affect</i>	.02	.02	.13	.99	.33
<i>Extraversion</i>	-<.01	.02	-.01	-.06	.95
<i>Agreeableness</i>	.02	.02	.14	1.24	.22
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-.02	.03	-.11	-.93	.36
<i>Imagination/Intellect</i>	.01	.03	.04	.32	.75

*Table 8. Coefficients for perceptions of favoritism predictive model variables*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Rule orientation</i>	.36	.19	.20	1.84	.07
<i>Emotional stability</i>	.38	.17	.36	2.20	.03
<i>Negative affect</i>	-.46	.24	-.28	-1.91	.06
<i>Belief in a just world</i>	.04	.08	.07	.59	.56
<i>Past supervisor experience</i>	.35	.36	.19	.99	.33
<i>Positive Affect</i>	.15	.16	.13	.99	.33
<i>Extraversion</i>	.06	.14	.06	.42	.68
<i>Agreeableness</i>	-.10	.15	-.08	-.69	.49
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	-.08	.19	-.05	-.44	.69
<i>Imagination/Intellect</i>	.25	.20	.14	1.23	.22

*Table 9. Regression coefficients for overall perceptions of favoritism and injustice predictive model variables*

APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND DEMOGRAPHICS VARIABLES CORRELATION TABLES

	Rule Orientation	Belief in Just World	Past Supervisor Favoritism
Rule Orientation	--	--	--
Belief in a Just World	-.15	--	--
Past Supervisor Favoritism	-.23	.34	--
Past Supervisor Procedural Justice	-.13	.34	.84

*Table 10.* Correlations of Pre-Scenario Measures

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Imagination/Intellect	Positive Affect
Extraversion	--	--	--	--	--	--
Agreeableness	.32	--	--	--	--	--
Conscientiousness	.30	.36	--	--	--	--
Emotional Stability	-.51	-.27	-.38	--	--	--
Imagination/Intellect	.28	.34	.37	-.29	--	--
Positive Affect	.51	.21	.37	-.37	.39	--
Negative Affect	-.36	-.15	-.24	.70	-.20	-.10

*Table 10.* Correlations of Post-Scenario Measures

APPENDIX E: INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)  
APPROVED INFORMED CONSENT

**Welcome and thank you for your interest in participating in this survey.**

The following materials are provided to inform you of the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be followed, and the estimated time it will take to complete. Please read carefully before consenting to participate. Please email any questions you have about this survey to the researcher at [rjwk3k@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:rjwk3k@mtmail.mtsu.edu).

**Purpose of Survey:**

The purpose of this study is to capture your perceptions and opinions of a workplace event. You will be asked to make judgments about a workplace situation and answer questions.

**Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the exercise:**

To begin, you will be asked to take a series of measures. Following your answering of the questions, you will be randomly assigned a short scenario (read time: 2-5 minutes) and asked to envision yourself as the employee that is described. There will be questions embedded in and following the scenario that you will be asked to answer. Then, you will be asked to provide some demographic data.

Finally, you will be dismissed and thanked for your time and willingness to participate.

The approximate duration of the study is **30 to 45 minutes**.

**IRB Details:**

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Middle Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board. Refer below for IRB details:

- Title "Judgement of a Workplace Situation"
- Principal Investigator: Risa Witherow; Faculty Advisor: Dr. Judith Van Hein
- Protocol ID 21-1172 2q Approval: 05/07/2021 Expiration: 06/30/2022

**Contact Details:** Please email the following individuals if you have questions about this study:

- Principal Investigator: Risa Witherow ([rjw3k@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:rjw3k@mtmail.mtsu.edu))
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Judith Van Hein ([Judith.vanhein@mtsu.edu](mailto:Judith.vanhein@mtsu.edu))

The MTSU Compliance office may be reached at [compliance@mtsu.edu](mailto:compliance@mtsu.edu).

**Your participation and compensation:**

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalties if you withdraw. There are no foreseen risks associated with participating in this study.

You will be compensated \$3.00USD for your participation in this study. You will be required to provide a compensation code to process your compensation. You will receive the code at the end

of the study. You will be compensated through Amazon or MTurk 3 days after you complete your participation. No compensation is provided by the investigators.

You may only participate in this study once. You will only be compensated for participating in this study once. Data will be excluded for any attempts to participate beyond the first attempt. The participant will not be compensated for additional attempts to participate.

**Exclusion criteria:**

**You are excluded from participating in this study and you will not be compensated if:**

- \*you are under the age of 18
- \*you have less than a year of work experience
- \*you are not a U.S. citizen

- **Confidentiality.** All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, *if* you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

**You are not required to do anything further if you decide not to enroll in this study. Just quit your browser. Please complete the response section below if you wish to learn more or you wish to part take in this study.**

**Participant Response Section**

No Yes I have read this informed consent document pertaining to the above-identified research

No Yes The research procedures to be conducted are clear to me

No Yes I confirm I am 18 years or older

No Yes I have read the “exclusion” criteria and I confirm that I meet the qualifications of this study

By clicking below, I affirm that I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study. I understand I can withdraw from this study at any time without facing any consequences.

NO, I do not consent

Yes, I consent

APPENDIX F: INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

**IRB**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
 Office of Research Compliance,  
 010A Sam Ingram Building,  
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd  
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129  
 FWA: 00005331/IRB Regn. 0003571



IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Friday, May 07, 2021

Protocol Title **Judgement of Workplace Situation**  
 Protocol ID **21-1172 2q**

Principal Investigator **Risa Witherow** (Student)  
 Faculty Advisor **Judith Van Hein**  
 Co-Investigators **Alexander Jackson and Rick Moffett**  
 Investigator Email(s) **rjw3k@mtmail.mtsu.edu; judith.vanhein@mtsu.edu**  
 Department/Affiliation **Psychology**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXEMPT** review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the research category **(2) Educational Tests, surveys, interviews or observations of public behavior (Qualtrics Survey)**. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars of this protocol are shown below:

<b>IRB Action</b>	<b>EXEMPT from further IRB Review</b> Exempt from further continuing review but other oversight requirements apply		
<b>Date of Expiration</b>	<b>6/30/2022</b>	<b>Date of Approval: 5/7/21</b>	<b>Recent Amendment: NONE</b>
<b>Sample Size</b>	ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY (120)		
<b>Participant Pool</b>	<b>Healthy adults (18 or older) - US workers recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk panel</b>		
<b>Exceptions</b>	Online consent followed by internet-based survey using Qualtrics is permitted (Qualtrics links on file).		
<b>Type of Interaction</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-interventional or Data Analysis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Virtual/Remote/Online Interview/survey <input type="checkbox"/> In person or physical– Mandatory COVID-19 Management (refer next page)		
<b>Mandatory Restrictions</b>	<b>1. All restrictions for exemption apply.</b> <b>2. The participants must be 18 years or older.</b> <b>3. Mandatory ACTIVE informed consent. Identifiable information including, names, addresses, voice/video data, must not be obtained.</b> <b>4. NOT approved for in-person data collection.</b>		
<b>Approved IRB Templates</b>	IRB Templates: NONE Non-MTSU Templates: Online Informed Consent and Recruitment scripts		
<b>Research Inducement</b>	\$3.00; MTSU OB documentation is not approved		
<b>Comments</b>	NONE		

**Summary of the Post-approval Requirements:** The PI and FA must read and abide by the post-approval conditions (Refer "Quick Links" in the bottom):

- **Final Report:** The Faculty Advisor (FA) is responsible for submitting a final report to close-out this protocol before **6/30/2022**; if more time is needed to complete the data collection, the FA must request an extension by email. **REMINDERS WILL NOT BE SENT. Failure to close-out (or request extension) may result in penalties** including cancellation of the data collected using this protocol or withholding student diploma.
- **Protocol Amendments:** IRB approval must be obtained for all types of amendments, such as:
  - Addition/removal of subject population and sample size.
  - Change in investigators.
  - Changes to the research sites – appropriate permission letter(s) from may be needed.
  - Alternation to funding.
  - Amendments must be clearly described in an addendum request form submitted by the FA.
  - The proposed change must be consistent with the approved protocol and they must comply with exemption requirements.
- **Reporting Adverse Events:** Research-related injuries to the participants and other events, such as, deviations & misconduct, must be reported within 48 hours of such events to [compliance@mtsu.edu](mailto:compliance@mtsu.edu).
- **Research Participant Compensation:** Compensation for research participation must be awarded as proposed in Chapter G of the Exempt protocol. The documentation of the monetary compensation must Appendix J and MUST NOT include protocol details when reporting to the MTSU Business Office.
- **COVID-19:** Regardless whether this study poses a threat to the participants or not, refer to the COVID-19 Management section for important information for the FA.

**COVID-19 Management:**

The FA must enforce social distancing guidelines and other practices to avoid viral exposure to the participants and other workers when physical contact with the subjects is made during the study.

- The study must be stopped if a participant or an investigator should test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of the research interaction. This must be reported to the IRB as an "adverse event."
- The FA must enforce the MTSU's "Return-to-work" questionnaire found in Pipeline must be filled and signed by the investigators on the day of the research interaction prior to physical contact.
- PPE must be worn if the participant would be within 6 feet from the each other or with an investigator.
- Physical surfaces that will come in contact with the participants must be sanitized between use
- **FA's Responsibility:** The FA is given the administrative authority to make emergency changes to protect the wellbeing of the participants and student researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the FA must notify the IRB after such changes have been made. The IRB will audit the changes at a later date and the PI will be instructed to carryout remedial measures if needed.

**Post-approval Protocol Amendments:**

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to implement minor and significant amendments that would not result in the cancellation of the protocol's eligibility for exemption. **Only THREE procedural amendments will be entertained per year (changes like addition/removal of research personnel are not restricted by this rule).**

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

**Post-approval IRB Actions:**

The following actions are done subsequent to the approval of this protocol on request by the PI or on recommendation by the IRB or by both.

Date	IRB Action(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

**Mandatory Data Storage Requirement:**

All research-related records (signed consent forms, investigator training and etc.) must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data must be stored for at least three (3) years after the study is closed. Additionally, the Tennessee

State data retention requirement may apply (*refer "Quick Links" below for policy 129*). Subsequently, the data may be destroyed in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity of the research subjects. **The IRB reserves the right to modify/update the approval criteria or change/cancel the terms listed in this notice.** Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board  
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

- Post-approval Responsibilities: <http://www.mtsu.edu/irb/FAQ/PostApprovalResponsibilities.php>
- Exemption Procedures: <https://mtsu.edu/irb/ExemptPaperWork.php>
- MTSU Policy 129: Records retention & Disposal: <https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/general/129.php>