

When performance demands enable change: how employees can overcome emotional dissonance and organizational underappreciation.

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Abstract

This study investigates the unexplored relationship between employees' experience of emotional dissonance and their engagement in change-oriented citizenship behavior, with a particular focus on the mediating role of organizational underappreciation and the moderating role of a performance-oriented work climate in this process. Survey data collected among employees across various industries show that experienced discrepancies between felt and organizationally desired emotions curtail employees' voluntary efforts to improve the organizational status quo because they develop a belief that their organization does not value them. When they operate in work environments that focus on performance comparisons though, this harmful dynamic becomes subdued. Organizations accordingly should avoid giving employees a reason to criticize their employer for treating them as unworthy members because this criticism generates a channel by which conflicting emotions escalate into work-related complacency, which might prevent the experienced hardships from being addressed. Instead, organizations should try to nurture stimulating work cultures that focus on performance to disrupt this counterproductive process.

Keywords: emotional dissonance; organizational underappreciation; change-oriented citizenship behavior; performance-oriented work climate

Introduction

Extant management research recognizes the instrumental role of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) for organizations; employees who exhibit OCBs contribute to organizational effectiveness by going beyond their formal job duties (Jain et al., 2011; Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2018). A critical form of such work-related voluntarism is *change-oriented* OCB, which refers to discretionary work efforts to improve the current organizational situation (Campbell & Im, 2016; Chiaburu et al., 2013). In contrast with more commonly studied forms of OCB that tend to reinforce the status quo, a change-oriented version is inherently disruptive and involves suggested changes to improve the organization or its functioning (De Clercq, 2022; Younas et al., 2021). Such change-oriented voluntarism might generate substantial, critical advantages for organizations, but it also can evoke negative responses among other employees, in the form of resistance, especially if they feel threatened by the proposed changes (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Hon et al., 2014). Considering this challenge, employees who already are experiencing negative work circumstances might be more likely to limit their change-oriented OCB efforts (Wang et al., 2021).

One relevant but hitherto overlooked factor in this regard is the experience of emotional dissonance, which implies that employees' work situation requires them to display emotions that contrast with the emotions they actually feel (Andela et al., 2015; Konze et al., 2019). When they suffer from such emotional conflicts, employees ideally would seek to alter the situation (Horo, 2014; Phillips et al., 2006), implying that they might engage in more change-oriented OCB. But we offer a complementary perspective: When employees suffer from emotional dissonance, they actually might engage in *less* change-oriented OCB because their suffering elicits negative thoughts about their employer (Abraham, 1999; Mishra & Kumar, 2016). By building on

research that reveals how emotional dissonance can spur various negative work outcomes, such as disengagement (Karatepe, 2011), burnout (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010), turnover intentions (Mishra & Kumar, 2016), or diminished service performance (van Gelderen et al., 2017), we predict that it also might escalate into diminished change-oriented OCB, and we specifically consider *why* and *when* this escalation might materialize.

First, the negative link between emotional dissonance and change-oriented voluntarism at work might arise because employees become convinced that their employer does not treat them as valued members (Milliman et al., 2003; Sui & Wang, 2014). This sense of organizational underappreciation implies diminished organization-based self-esteem, which likely leaves employees frustrated by the lack of recognition they receive for their daily work efforts (Gardner et al., 2015). In line with conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001), their emotional dissonance and associated sense of being undervalued may lead employees to curtail their constructive, extra-role work efforts, because they hold their organization accountable for depleting their psychological well-being, as a critical personal resource (Cho, 2019; Teo et al., 2022). Second, we rely on COR theory to establish the prediction that employees' actual responses to emotional dissonance depend on their perceptions of the work environment (Brown et al., 1998; Spurk et al., 2019). We focus specifically on the beneficial role of *performance-oriented work climates* (Menguc et al. 2017; Schrock et al., 2016), in which the organization pushes employees to excel and exhibit stellar performance, so the hardships due to emotional dissonance may seem like positive challenges (Spurk et al., 2019, 2021) and *buffer* against both the resource-draining effect of emotional dissonance and subsequent sense of being underappreciated (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Horo, 2014).

These nuanced considerations enable us to establish several contributions. First, we theorize and empirically demonstrate that emotional dissonance, as a substantial threat to employees' psychological well-being (Cho, 2019; Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010), decreases the likelihood that they go out of their way to help their employing organization because they become convinced their employer does not recognize their work contributions (Bowling et al., 2010). By identifying a sense of organizational underappreciation as an important link between emotional dissonance and thwarted change-oriented OCB, we complement and *integrate* research that shows how conflicting emotions can lead employees to perceive poor organizational support (Phillips et al., 2006; Pugh et al., 2011) with parallel research that details how a sense of being undervalued diminishes employees' willingness to go beyond the call of duty (Chan et al., 2013; Cottrill et al., 2014). This unique perspective reveals how organizational underappreciation can produce a *self-perpetuating* dynamic: Employees who must fake their emotional displays are upset and feel undervalued, so they exhibit work-related complacency that, ironically, might keep them from resolving the source of their frustration (Bettencourt, 2004; Carter et al., 2014).

Second, we respond to calls for contingency approaches to understand how employees respond to emotional dissonance (Cho, 2019; Konze et al., 2019) and thus offer valuable insights into how organizations can *contain* the risk of diminished change-oriented OCB in the presence of emotional dissonance—namely, by stimulating employees' performance focus (Schrock et al., 2016). Even if excessive organizational attention to performance goals can be harmful, to the extent that performance pressures overwhelm employees (Fletcher et al., 2008; Ng, 2017), performance-oriented cultures typically have positive influences by replenishing employees' energy reservoirs (Menguc et al., 2017; Spurk et al., 2019). Consistent with COR theory (Hobfoll

& Shirom, 2000), we accordingly predict an *indirect* beneficial role of performance-oriented work climates. These stimulating climates may prevent resource-draining emotional dissonance from escalating into a sense of organizational underappreciation and then diminished change-oriented work voluntarism. Thus, we pinpoint how performance-oriented climates can *disrupt* the aforementioned negative dynamic.

Conceptual background, relevance of context, and hypotheses

Benefits and challenges of change-oriented OCB

Employees can contribute meaningfully to the competitive standing of their organizations by performing work activities that are not explicitly outlined in their job descriptions (Organ et al., 2006). These activities tend to be cooperative and affirm or reinforce existing organizational practices (Podsakoff et al., 2009, 2018). But change-oriented extra-role behaviors instead seek deliberately to alter existing practices and invoke positive transformations that improve the status quo (Younas et al., 2021). Such efforts can be beneficial for the organization but also for the employees who perform them, such as by generating a sense of personal accomplishment when the changes are successful and help the employer thrive (Campbell & Im, 2016).

Yet change-oriented OCBs also generate difficulties for the people who perform them. Extra-role activities, in and of themselves, may be so energy-consuming that they compromise employees' ability to meet their in-role job obligations (Bolino et al., 2015; Koopman et al., 2016). Moreover, when they seek to alter the status quo, change-oriented employees might encounter greater resistance from their colleagues to the extent that those colleagues feel personally attacked by the suggested changes or fear their organizational standing might be compromised by any disruptions to the status quo (Hon et al., 2014; Van Dijk & Van Dick, 2009). If they anticipate these pertinent challenges, employees who already are experiencing

resource-depleting work circumstances may feel unmotivated to allocate significant energy to disruptive, extra-role work behaviors (Haq et al., 2020; Hobfoll, 2001). For example, employees are less likely to engage in change-oriented OCB if they also must deal with narcissistic supervision (Wang et al., 2021), unsupportive colleagues (Chiaburu et al., 2013), dysfunctional political games (Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2012), a sense of organizational disidentification (De Clercq, 2022), or negative spillovers of family stress into the work domain (De Clercq, 2020). These determinants all have a consistent result: they undermine employees' willingness to help their organization with unsolicited, change-invoking work efforts (Choi, 2007).

We investigate another work condition that seems likely to produce the same limiting effect. Emotional dissonance is a "state of discomfort, unease, and tension due to the discrepancy between felt and expressed or between felt and organizationally desired emotions" (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010, p. 403). When their employer requires employees to fake their emotions, it fails to fulfill their emotional needs (Horo, 2014). To address this uncomfortable situation, employees could try to implement change, but we theorize that the experience of emotional dissonance instead may oppress them so much that they become *complacent* (Chiaburu et al., 2013). As mentioned, we propose both (1) a mediating role of a sense of organizational underappreciation in the link between emotional dissonance and decreased change-oriented OCB and (2) mitigation of this mediated connection by perceptions of a performance-oriented work climate. With these predictions, we seek to help organizations avoid a scenario in which employees respond to emotionally upsetting work situations in counterproductive ways that ultimately sustain the tension.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory

Both the mediating role of organizational underappreciation and the moderating role of performance-oriented work climate that we propose are anchored in COR theory.¹ In his groundbreaking work, Hobfoll (1988, 1989) offered COR theory as a relevant framework for predicting how people cope with adverse circumstances and also ascribed a significant role to their resource protection motives. In subsequent work, Hobfoll (2001) elaborated on two key principles that guide COR theory: (1) people are more motivated to avoid resource losses than to acquire resource gains and (2) people must invest resources to protect themselves against resource losses, bounce back from prior losses, or obtain further resources. In turn, these principles inform four corollaries: (1) people who have access to more resources are less vulnerable to resource losses and better placed to produce resource gains; (2) current resource losses bring about future losses (i.e., resource loss spirals); (3) current resource gains bring about future gains (i.e., resource gain spirals), but resource loss spirals are more influential than resource gain spirals; and (4) people who experience drained resources adopt self-protective strategies to preserve their remaining resources (Hobfoll, 2001).²

For the purposes of this study, we leverage two premises that reflect some of these corollaries. The first premise, in line with the fourth COR corollary, is that employees' work-related sentiments and activities are driven by their perceived need to safeguard their current resource reservoirs and decrease the likelihood of further resource losses when they confront resource-draining work situations (Hobfoll, 2001). This premise aligns with the so-called

¹ Other theories clearly could be relevant for predicting some of the proposed relationships too. For example, employees might respond negatively to emotional dissonance because they seek to restore their sense of job-related freedom or control, in line with reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), or because they want to retaliate for violations of their expectations of appropriate organizational treatments, as would be predicted by social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). But COR theory offers a comprehensive framework that can substantiate all of the theoretical links (mediation and moderation), so it is advantageous in terms of theoretical parsimony (Miles, 2012).

² Hobfoll and colleagues (2018) later reorganized these two principles and four corollaries into four principles and three corollaries, which still resonate with the foundational arguments provided by Hobfoll (2001).

desperation principle, as explicated by Hobfoll and colleagues (2018, p. 106): “When people’s resources are outstretched or exhausted, they enter a defensive mode to preserve the self which is often defensive, aggressive, and may become irrational.”³ In particular, the resource drainage they suffer due to upsetting work conditions directs employees toward self-defensive beliefs and behaviors that might help them *cope* (Pandey et al., 2021). For example, in prior applications of COR theory, employees’ exposure to unfair organizational procedures prompts them to adopt self-defensive reactions in the form of beliefs about job ambiguity and diminished voice behavior as means to cope with the difficulties they endure due to the unfairness (De Clercq & Pereira, 2022). The second premise, consistent with the first COR corollary, is that employees’ access to relevant resources *buffers* self-protective reactions to resource-depleting work circumstances, including contextual resources that render it less probable that the experienced challenges deplete their resource bases (Hobfoll, 2001). Thus, for example, COR-based research shows how employees’ negative reactions to emotionally upsetting interpersonal conflict can be mitigated by their access to clear job descriptions or transparent information provision (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2021).

In COR theory, “resources” represent a broad notion, such that Hobfoll (2001, p. 339) conceptualizes resources as “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources.” But a particularly important resource, according to both Hobfoll’s (2001) foundational work and subsequent applications of COR theory (Pisaniello et al., 2012; Teo et al., 2022), is their psychological health or well-being. As Haq and colleagues (2022) show, employees who experience job insecurity sense threats to their mental well-being,

³ Our focus is on the “defensive” aspect, or reluctance to engage in change-oriented behaviors, as opposed to the “aggressive” aspect, which would suggest active engagement in deviant work behavior (Azeem et al., 2021).

and when they believe that they cannot avoid such threats, they respond with self-protective behaviors, including reluctance to perform their work duties in a timely manner. Parallel research on emotional dissonance indicates how this adverse condition causes damage to employees' psychological well-being because it generates concerns about whether the organization cares for their personal feelings (Horo, 2014; Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010).

In line with the aforementioned first premise, we postulate that employees who experience emotional dissonance seek to cope with the threats to their psychological well-being resources by forming convictions that they are underappreciated by their employer (Bowling et al., 2010), and then halting any extra-role work efforts to alter or enhance the organizational status quo. In detail, their sense that their organization does not recognize their work contributions, and subsequent propensity to limit their change-oriented OCB, represent compelling reactions that allow them to avoid additional drainage of their psychological well-being resources (Hobfoll, 2001). These reactions, at their core, function as coping strategies that enable employees to express their frustrations and feel better about themselves in the presence of experienced emotional hardships (Pandey et al., 2021).

The second premise then suggests that these self-defensive reactions are less likely if employees have access to contextual resources that diminish the perceived need to exhibit the reactions, such as when they operate in stimulating work contexts that grant them discretionary energy that they can leverage to deal with the challenges (Hobfoll, 2001; Quinn et al., 2012). Prior research on high-performance work systems—defined as integrated systems of human resource practices intended to increase workforce performance (Combs et al., 2006)—suggests that coherent, performance-oriented policies stimulate positive work sentiments (Miao et al., 2021) and change-invoking work behaviors (Farrukh et al., 2022). Similarly, if employees

perceive their work environments as performance-driven (Schrock et al., 2016), it might *diminish* the likelihood (1) that they seek to cope with emotional dissonance by criticizing their organization for treating them as undervalued members and (2) that these criticisms, in turn, evoke work-related apathy in the form of diminished change-oriented OCB. Performance-oriented climates function like challenge stressors that provide employees with the drive to tackle and overcome difficult work situations, such that they find it less necessary to shield their psychological well-being resources with self-protective beliefs and actions (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

Figure 1 summarizes the resulting conceptual framework, including the mediating role of organizational underappreciation and moderating roles of performance-oriented work climate.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Relevance of the study context

As we explain in detail in the Methodology section, we test this conceptual framework in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Here, we offer justification of the theoretical value of this context. In general, we move beyond the common focus on Western or Eastern Asian contexts and address calls for more research on employee well-being and behaviors in Middle Eastern countries (Aboramadan, 2022; Arain et al., 2021). Fundamentally though, the UAE context also is interesting in terms of its cultural profile, and our tests of the proposed framework in the UAE offer associated value for countries that share similar cultural profiles.

In particular, we reason that three cultural features of the UAE—high scores on uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism (Hofstede et al., 2010)—may increase the *strength* and validity of the proposed relationships, with respect to both mediation and moderation dynamics. In countries marked by uncertainty avoidance, employees may feel

especially stressed by conflicts between their own felt and organizationally required emotions, so they could respond particularly vigorously, with negative beliefs and work-related complacency. Such responses might intensify in power-distant cultures, where it might not be uncommon for senior leaders to “force” employees to express emotions that conflict with their felt emotions. Finally, collectivism might leave employees generally hesitant to stand out by calling for changes, such that people in collectivist cultures might be more likely to use emotional dissonance as an excuse to avoid such activities. Yet we also acknowledge arguments that these three cultural characteristics could strengthen the proposed buffering roles of performance-oriented work climates. That is, the beneficial effects we predict, such that performance-oriented work climates discourage employees from displaying self-protective responses to emotional dissonance, could be particularly influential in cultures where people seek to avoid any uncertainties that would result from their failure to meet performance standards, tend to comply with leader-set performance expectations, or seek to support the organizational collective. Even as we acknowledge these likely influences though, we emphasize that the logic for the theoretical links in Figure 1 is not culturally specific. That is, we expect the nature or *signs* of these links to remain consistent across a wide array of countries. The arguments leading into our hypotheses, as outlined hereafter, accordingly do not refer to any country or cultural context.

Mediating role of organizational underappreciation

We predict a positive link between employees’ experience of emotional dissonance and their sense of organizational underappreciation. In line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), the disappointment employees experience when their organization expects them to display emotions that conflict with their true feelings may threaten their psychological well-being resources to such an extent that they look for a solution, such as accusing their employer of not treating them

as valuable members (Horo, 2014; Karatepe, 2011). If they experience discrepancy between their felt emotions and the emotions they must express to comply with organizational expectations, employees likely sense that they are not taken seriously (Mishra & Kumar, 2016; Phillips et al., 2006). By faulting the organization, for failing to give them the recognition that they deserve, employees can vent their frustrations and avoid further depletion of their psychological well-being (Bowling et al., 2010; Haq et al., 2022). That is, employees may experience emotional dissonance as less intrusive to the extent that they can make their organization responsible for conveying insufficient appreciation for their efforts. Formally:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between employees' experience of emotional dissonance and their sense of organizational underappreciation.

We adopt a similar rationale to predict a negative relationship between employees' sense of organizational underappreciation and change-oriented OCB. Prior applications of COR theory illustrate that employees diminish their change-oriented voluntary work efforts in response to a sense of organizational disidentification (De Clercq, 2022) or perceptions that the organizational climate prioritizes formally prescribed job duties (Haq et al., 2020). For this study, we similarly propose that halting extra-role efforts that otherwise could enhance the organizational status quo, as a response to their sense that the organization does not recognize their professional contributions, can protect employees' mental well-being and make them feel better about themselves (Haq et al., 2022; Hobfoll, 2001). Specifically, a reluctance to engage in change-oriented OCB, in accordance with beliefs about being undervalued, helps employees counter the depletion of their psychological well-being resources because their complacent behavioral responses seem highly justified (Bowling et al., 2010; Chiaburu et al., 2013). Furthermore, the logic of COR theory indicates that diminished change-oriented OCB might produce resource *gains* in the form of personal gratification (Hobfoll, 2001), in that employees who feel

underappreciated may gain a sense of fulfillment if they refuse to provide constructive, voluntary support to the seemingly undeserving employer (Bowling et al., 2010; Cottrill et al., 2014). We accordingly predict:

Hypothesis 2: There is a negative relationship between employees' sense of organizational underappreciation and change-oriented OCB.

Integrating these arguments suggests a critical mediating role of organizational underappreciation. The sense that organizationally desired emotions do not align with felt emotions increases the likelihood that employees refrain from productive, change-oriented OCB *because* they believe their organization, which does not appear to value their work efforts, is to blame (Bowling et al., 2010). To the extent that employees must fake emotions to adhere to organizational expectations, the probability that they invest personal energy in extra-role work behaviors to improve the organizational status quo is *subdued*, guided by their desire to protect their psychological well-being and criticize the employer for failing to acknowledge their value (Haq et al., 2022; Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010). Prior studies indicate that a sense of being undervalued links *other* adverse work experiences, such as authoritarian leadership (Chan et al., 2013) or broken psychological contracts (Gardner et al., 2015), with a refusal to engage in productive work behaviors. We extend such insights by postulating:

Hypothesis 3: Employees' sense of organizational underappreciation mediates the relationship between their experience of emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB.

Moderating role of performance-oriented work climate

In an additional application of COR theory, we pinpoint a possible beneficial role of a pertinent moderator: The resource-draining effect of emotional dissonance might be mitigated if employees can draw from work environments that stimulate them to excel, instead of remaining passive (Hobfoll, 2001). We specifically propose that a performance-oriented work climate

moderates the relationships between employees' experience of emotional dissonance and sense of organizational underappreciation (Hypothesis 1) and between this sense and employees' change-oriented OCB (Hypothesis 2).

First, emotional dissonance might evoke less frustration with being undervalued if employees can draw on their positive work energy, derived from stimulating work contexts (Quinn et al., 2012). An organizational focus on performance provides a positive challenge for employees, encouraging them to put organizational interests ahead of personal ones (Menguc et al., 2017), so they might assign less weight to the discrepancies they experience between felt and organizationally desired emotions (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010). In turn, they experience less need to protect their psychological well-being resources by accusing the firm of failing to appreciate their work contributions (Bowling et al., 2010; Hobfoll, 2001). Similarly, when employees feel energized by performance-driven work climates, they tend to develop more favorable perceptions about their employment situation in general because they sense that they are taken seriously (Spurk et al., 2019). With these positive perceptions, employees are less likely to suffer from tarnished psychological well-being, even in the presence of emotional dissonance (Cho, 2019), which should limit the likelihood that they accuse their organization of not valuing them (Chen et al., 2016). We predict:

Hypothesis 4: The positive relationship between employees' experience of emotional dissonance and sense of organizational underappreciation is moderated by their perceptions of a performance-oriented work climate, such that this relationship is weaker at higher levels of such perceptions.

Second, the likelihood that employees' beliefs about an unappreciative employer escalate into diminished change-oriented OCB might be mitigated if employees perceive stimulating, performance-oriented work environments (Brown et al., 1998). Work climates that encourage employees to excel can boost their energy levels, which they can leverage to respond to

unfavorable organizational treatments in constructive instead of destructive ways (Schrock et al., 2016). For example, perceptions of a performance-oriented work climate may lead employees to reframe their frustrations about organizational underappreciation as positive challenges (Menguc et al., 2017; Spurk et al., 2021) and motivate them to find ways to enhance their organizational standing, such as by embracing change-oriented work voluntarism instead of rejecting it in their effort to protect their psychological well-being (Haq et al., 2022). In contrast, employees who lack stimulating work environments likely continue to interpret organizational underappreciation as a flaw in the organization that justifies their complacency (Bowling et al., 2010; Hobfoll, 2001). They feel affirmed in their convictions that their diligent and voluntary work efforts are not appreciated by their employer (Chen et al., 2016), so they continue to find ways to avoid “wasting” their precious energy on discretionary work efforts from which their organization otherwise would benefit (Quinn et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 5: The negative relationship between employees’ sense of organizational underappreciation and change-oriented OCB is moderated by their perceptions of a performance-oriented work climate, such that this relationship is weaker at higher levels of such perceptions.

This combined set of arguments culminates in the prediction of a moderated mediation dynamic (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020). In addition to being a logical outcome of the mediation and moderation hypotheses, this dynamic provides the additional insight that performance-oriented work climates serve as relevant contingency factors that mitigate the *indirect*, negative relationship between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB, through organizational underappreciation (Hayes, 2018). If employees can rely on the positive energy generated by performance-driven work cultures (Menguc et al., 2017), the *explanatory* role of beliefs about being undervalued in translating emotional dissonance into tarnished change-oriented OCB becomes less salient. These stimulating work environments counter the personal hardships of

conflicting emotions (Horo, 2014), as well as the subsequent sense of being undervalued (Bowling et al., 2010), so employees have less need to formulate negative, self-protective responses to protect their psychological well-being (Haq et al., 2022). But if employees cannot rely on invigorating work climates, their sense of being undervalued offers a more prominent explanation for how suffering from emotional dissonance escalates into apathy.

Hypothesis 6: The indirect negative relationship between employees' experience of emotional dissonance and their change-oriented OCB, through their sense of organizational underappreciation, is moderated by perceptions of a performance-oriented work climate, such that this indirect relationship is weaker at higher levels of such perceptions.

Methodology

Data collection and sample

The research hypotheses were tested with survey data collected among employees who work in six organizations in the UAE, spanning different industry sectors, such as food and beverage, chemicals, healthcare, and pharmaceuticals. The inclusion of different sectors increases the external validity of the study. As we explained, the theoretical arguments that inform our research hypotheses are country-neutral, so the nature of the hypothesized relationships is not expected to vary across countries. Yet by focusing on one country, we can avoid the influence of unobserved country-level effects on the extent to which employees respond to emotion-related hardships, as would occur in multicountry studies (Hofstede et al., 2010). For the survey development, we administered a pilot version among five employees who did not take part in the actual data collection. Their feedback led to some minor adjustments to improve the survey's readability.

The sampling frame consisted of employee lists provided by the senior management of the participating organizations. To this comprehensive list, we applied a random digit generator and selected 400 target participants, whom we guaranteed complete confidentiality. We

explained that our interest was in identifying broad patterns in the aggregate data, not pinpointing individual cases. We also emphasized that their participation was voluntary and that their employer would not have any knowledge about who completed the survey or not. They could withdraw at any point in time. Further, we explained that different participants likely would give varying answers to specific questions and that it was instrumental for the validity of the results that they provide honest opinions. Such robust assurances reduce the likelihood of social desirability or acquiescence biases (Jordan & Troth, 2020). In addition, to diminish the risk of expectancy bias—when participants adapt their answers to match their interpretation of the study’s purposes (Malhotra, 2010)—a statement that accompanied the survey indicated that the general objective was to develop a better understanding of some challenges and opportunities that employees might experience in their daily work functioning. We also did not mention any specific research objectives. From the 400 initially contacted employees, we received 284 completed responses, for a response rate of 76%. The final sample consisted of 83% men and 17% women—which reflects the male-dominated nature of business in the UAE⁴—and they had worked for their organization for an average of eight years.

Measures

We operationalized the focal constructs with items drawn from previous studies using seven-point Likert anchors that ranged between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). The items are listed in the Appendix.

Emotional dissonance. To assess the extent to which employees experience conflict between felt and organizationally prescribed emotions, we applied a four-item scale of emotional

⁴ This male-dominated sample clearly is not representative of the work population in many countries. To check for gender effects, we explicitly controlled for gender in the statistical models (reported hereafter) but found no significant effects. In line with Becker’s (2005) recommendation, we also checked whether the statistical results for the proposed relationships were robust to the inclusion or exclusion of gender; they were. Finally, a post hoc analysis indicated that gender did not significantly moderate the relationships that constitute the mediation link.

dissonance (Andela et al., 2015). Two sample items were “My work situation requires me to express emotions that vary with those I actually feel” and “I experience a discrepancy between the emotions that I express to be professional and what I feel” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$).

Organizational underappreciation. We measured employees’ sense that their organization does not appreciate their work efforts with a reverse-coded, five-item scale of organization-based self-esteem (Milliman et al., 2003). In light of our conceptual focus on whether employees hold their employing organization responsible for undervaluing them, we slightly adapted the original wording, adding a short phrase that referred to the organization’s functioning. For example, participants indicated whether “The way my organization functions makes me feel like I am an important part of this place” and “The way my organization functions makes me feel that there is faith in me around here” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$).

Change-oriented citizenship behavior. We assessed employees’ propensities to alter and improve the organizational status quo on a voluntary basis with a four-item scale of change-oriented citizenship behavior (Choi, 2007). Consistent with Morrison and Phelps (1999), a statement included before the items referred to voluntary efforts beyond formal job duties, and two example items were “I often suggest changes to unproductive rules or policies” and “I often suggest work improvement ideas to others” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$). Gathering self-assessments of change-oriented OCB is in line with prior research (Haq et al., 2020; López-Domínguez et al., 2013; Simo et al., 2016), as well as the logical argument that employees are better positioned to offer accurate, comprehensive assessments of their own disruptive work activities, compared with peers or supervisors. Employees tend to be cautious about letting others know about their potentially upsetting ideas, so ratings from others might underestimate the effort employees dedicate to such activities (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017; Zhou et al., 2008).

Performance-oriented work climate. To measure the extent to which employees operate in work environments that stimulate them to excel, we applied a four-item scale of competitive psychological climate (Brown et al., 1998). The respondents indicated, for example, whether “The amount of recognition you get in this company depends on how you perform compared to others” and “Organizational authorities frequently compare my performance with that of my coworkers” (Cronbach’s alpha = .76).

Control variables. The statistical models included two control variables: gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and organizational tenure (in years). Female employees may be less inclined to disrupt the status quo with change-invoking ideas (Huang et al., 2020b), and employees who have worked for their organization for a longer time may be more confident in their abilities to be successful in their discretionary work activities (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Construct validity. To assess the validity of the study’s constructs, we estimated a four-factor measurement model, with a confirmatory factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The fit of this model was excellent: $\chi^2(113) = 227.55$, confirmatory fit index = .94, incremental fit index = .95, Tucker–Lewis index = .93, root mean squared error of approximation = .06, and standardized root mean squared residual = .06. In support of the presence of convergent validity, each of the factor loadings was strongly significant ($p < .001$), and the average variance extracted (AVE) value for each construct was higher than .50, with the exception of performance-oriented work climate, for which it equaled .45. Notably, AVE values lower than .50 but higher than .40 are acceptable in underexplored country settings (De Clercq et al., 2021; Kashif et al., 2017). We also obtained evidence of discriminant validity, in that (1) each of the AVE values exceeded the squared correlations between the associated construct pairs and (2) the fit of the six models that included unconstrained construct pairs, in which the correlations between two constructs could

vary freely, was significantly better than that of the constrained counterparts, in which the correlations were forced to equal 1 ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} > 3.84, p < .05$; Hair et al., 2010).

Common source bias. To evaluate the presence of common source bias, we applied two statistical tests. First, with Harman's one-factor test, based on an exploratory factor analysis (Huang et al., 2020a), we assessed whether a single factor captured the majority of the total variance in the data. The first retained factor accounted for only 25% of the total variance, which mitigates concerns about the use of a common respondent. Second, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis that compared the fit of a single-factor model—in which the items of the four focal constructs loaded on one factor—with that of the four-factor model. The fit of the single-factor model was significantly worse ($\chi^2(6) = 1,358.09, p < .001$) than its four-factor equivalent, offering additional reassurance that common source bias was not an issue (Hair et al., 2010). The probability of this bias also tends to be significantly lower when the theoretical framework includes one or more moderating effects because it is challenging for participants to predict the hypotheses in this case and adapt their answers to these expectations (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Statistical technique

We relied on the Process macro, developed for SPSS (Hayes et al., 2017), to test the hypotheses statistically. This approach enables estimations of individual paths (Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5), in combination with assessments of mediation (Hypothesis 3) and moderated mediation (Hypothesis 6) effects. Because the Process macro applies bootstrapping, it can account for scenarios in which the sampling distributions of mediation and moderated mediation effects might be skewed and deviate from normality (MacKinnon et al., 2004). To assess mediation, we calculated the indirect relationship between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB through organizational underappreciation, together with the associated confidence

interval (CI), in the Process macro's Model 4 (Hayes, 2018). In this first step, we also estimated the signs and significance levels of the direct paths between emotional dissonance and organizational underappreciation and between organizational underappreciation and change-oriented OCB. To check for moderated mediation, we calculated the CIs for the conditional indirect effects of emotional dissonance at three levels of performance-oriented work climate—one standard deviation (SD) below its mean, at its mean, and one SD above its mean. In line with the proposed theoretical framework, we ran the Process macro's Model 58 (Hayes, 2018) to estimate the moderating effect of performance-oriented work climate on the relationships of emotional dissonance with organizational underappreciation *and* of organizational underappreciation with change-oriented OCB.

Results

Table 1 contains the zero-order correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics of the study variables; Table 2 shows the mediation results generated by the Process macro. In empirical support of Hypothesis 1, we found that employees who experience a discrepancy between felt and organizationally desired emotions criticize their organization for not treating them as valued members, as indicated by the positive relationship between emotional dissonance and organizational underappreciation ($\beta = .175, p < .001$). We also obtained empirical support for Hypothesis 2 because a sense of organizational underappreciation directs employees away from voluntary work efforts to change the organizational status quo, as displayed in the negative relationship we find ($\beta = -.289, p < .001$). The effect size ($-.050$) of the *indirect* relationship between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB, through organizational underappreciation, featured a CI that did *not* include 0 $[-.094, -.018]$, in support of the mediation effect that we advanced in Hypothesis 3.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here]

In our conceptual arguments, we also predicted that work environments that encourage employees to excel subdue the hardships of conflicting emotions (Hypothesis 4) and associated sense of being undervalued (Hypothesis 5). Table 3 indicates a negative, significant effect of the emotional dissonance \times performance-oriented work climate product term ($\beta = -.071, p < .05$) for predicting organizational underappreciation, together with a positive, significant effect of the organizational underappreciation \times performance-oriented work climate product term ($\beta = .119, p < .01$) for predicting change-oriented OCB. According to the Process macro results, the relationship between emotional dissonance and organizational underappreciation became weaker at higher levels of performance-oriented work climate (.278 at one SD below the mean, .189 at the mean, .083 at one SD above the mean), which corroborates Hypothesis 4. The results revealed diminishing effect sizes of the relationship between organizational underappreciation and change-oriented OCB at increasing levels of performance-oriented work climate too (-.442 at one SD below its mean, -.293 at its mean, -.114 at one SD above its mean), in support of Hypothesis 5.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

An explicit test of the proposed moderated mediation dynamic (Hypothesis 6)—whereby a performance-oriented work climate subdues the explanatory role of organizational underappreciation in the link between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB (Hayes, 2018)—indicated that the strength of the conditional *indirect* relationship between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB diminished at higher levels of performance-oriented work climate. Specifically, the indirect effects ranged from -.123 at one SD below the mean of the moderator, to -.056 at the mean, to -.009 at one SD above it. The CIs did *not* include 0 at the two

lower levels of performance-oriented work climate ($[-.222; -.047]$ and $[-.096; -.022]$, respectively), but the CI included 0 at the most elevated level ($[-.032; .007]$). Performance-oriented work climate thus mitigated the negative indirect relationship between emotional dissonance and change-oriented OCB, through organizational underappreciation, consistent with Hypothesis 6 and our overall conceptual framework.

Discussion

Theoretical implications

This study provides valuable theoretical insights by detailing how the experience of emotional dissonance can dampen change-oriented OCB, with particular attention to pertinent factors that *affect* this translation. Frustrations about conflict between felt and organizationally required emotions can steer employees away from generating productive work outcomes, such as job performance (Phillips et al., 2016) or regular OCB (Cheung & Cheung, 2013). To clarify why and how emotional dissonance can leave employees reluctant to go out of their way to *disrupt* the organizational status quo, we consider the types of work environments in which such detrimental processes are less or more likely to materialize. Drawing from COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), we propose that (1) employees may halt extra-role, change-related work efforts in the presence of emotional dissonance due to their convictions that they are not treated as valued organizational members, and (2) a performance-oriented work climate can subdue this process. The empirical outcomes confirm these theoretical predictions.

A first theoretical takeaway of this research thus stems from our novel explanation of how emotional dissonance, a resource-draining work situation (Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2010), tarnishes change-oriented OCB: Employees feel insufficiently appreciated for their work efforts (Bowling et al., 2010). This explanatory mechanism is theoretically interesting because change-

oriented OCB, in ideal cases, could provide a means to *resolve* sources of dissonance, such as emotionally charged interactions with customers (Heuven et al., 2006) or exposure to verbal aggression (Yeh, 2015), for example. Instead, as our findings reveal, a sensed demand that they fake emotions *dampens* employees' dedicated efforts to improve existing organizational practices voluntarily because they form beliefs about being undervalued, a response that resonates with their desire to avoid further damage to their psychological well-being resources (Cho, 2019; Horo, 2014). In line with COR theory, employees respond to resource-draining emotional hardships with negative thoughts and behavioral apathy—responses that help them cope (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Pandey et al., 2021). Our study therefore provides the critical insight that, without intending to, employees might become *complicit* in allowing unfavorable organizational practices to persist, with detrimental implications for their own emotional well-being.

Another theoretical implication of this study pertains to how this negative dynamic might be disrupted when employees feel energized by stimulating work climates (Spurk et al., 2019). In this scenario, employees' sense that their organization fails to exhibit sufficient appreciation for their efforts are less prominent conduits through which emotional dissonance escalates to the point that they deliberately diminish their change-oriented OCB. This beneficial, mitigating role of a performance-oriented work climate may appear counterintuitive, in light of the alternative argument that strict performance expectations could exhaust employees and cause them to suffer more from emotion-based hardships (Fletcher et al., 2008). But our novel insight reveals that convictions about being undervalued and refusals to engage in change-oriented work voluntarism are *less* common among employees who experience such hardships and perceive their work environments as performance-driven (Schrock et al., 2016) because they feel energized by this

work environment (Menguc et al., 2017; Quinn et al., 2010). This boost in their work stamina stimulates them, even if they struggle with conflicting emotions, to retain positive beliefs about their organizational membership and not fall into a trap of work-related complacency.

In summary, the mitigating role of a performance-oriented work climate that we identify can protect employees against the risk that they respond to emotion-based difficulties in passive, ultimately detrimental ways. Our perspective aligns with evidence of a similar, indirect, beneficial role of performance-driven work contexts in enabling employees to leverage their self-efficacy in the form of enhanced engagement (Menguc et al., 2017). But we provide a complementary insight related to work-related adversity: employees' negative beliefs about organizational underappreciation and reluctance to undertake change-oriented OCB due to their experience of emotional dissonance get *disrupted* if they also feel invigorated by an organizational focus on performance. Such work contexts reduce the risk that one negative situation (emotional dissonance) begets another (work-related complacency that limits identifications of pertinent solutions).

Practical implications

The research findings have great relevance for management practice. Organizational decision-makers should be aware that employees experience significant frustration when they feel compelled to display emotions that do not align with how they actually feel. Due to this frustration, they might develop beliefs that their employer does not value them (Bowling et al., 2010). These beliefs harm both the organization and the employees by encouraging employees to halt voluntary, change-oriented work efforts, even those that might address the causes of their emotional hardships (Podsakoff et al., 2018). A related challenge is that employees may be reluctant to complain about their emotional dissonance for fear of being judged as overly

sensitive, complaining, or incompetent (Horo, 2014). Therefore, in addition to removing sources of emotional dissonance, organizational decision-makers should take measures to encourage employees to *speak up* about emotion-based hardships. This goal might be achieved by nurturing trust-based relationships with supervisors (Son, 2019) or installing confidential communication channels with designated representatives of the human resource department or an ombudsperson (Harrison et al., 2013).

In addition to addressing the sources of emotional dissonance and encouraging employees to speak up about the associated challenges, this study pinpoints a potential means to prevent the escalation of emotional dissonance into diminished change-related work voluntarism: create work environments that encourage employees to shine in their performance (Spurk et al., 2019). We carefully note a caveat though; organizations should not go overboard and impose unrealistic performance expectations, such that employees “freeze” instead of seeking solutions to their emotional suffering. But if organizational authorities can establish reasonable, inspiring, performance-driven work contexts, employees are less likely to become passive when they experience discrepancies between their felt emotions and those required by their jobs (van Gelderen et al., 2017). Ultimately, employees who feel inspired by ambitious work environments are less likely to develop negative opinions about their organizational membership, even in the presence of emotional dissonance, so they remain motivated to go beyond the call of duty and help improve the organization’s effectiveness voluntarily.

Limitations and future research

Some weaknesses of this study might set the stage for continued research endeavors. First, the possibility of reverse causality cannot be eliminated completely, even if our arguments are anchored in the robust COR framework, according to which resource-depleting emotional

hardships elicit negative work-related beliefs and behavioral responses that help employees avoid further resource losses (Hobfoll, 2001). But successful change-related work efforts could generate more positive beliefs among employees about how their organization enables them to make a positive difference, which then could diminish their sense of emotional dissonance (Campbell & Im, 2016). Similarly, we applied the COR-based logic that employees' negative responses to emotion-based hardships are informed by their desire to avoid further losses in their psychological well-being resources (Haq et al., 2022); continued research could formally measure these resources, including how they might change over time, in sequential mediation models. A related extension might conduct a comparative assessment of COR and other theories, in terms of their ability to explain employees' responses to emotional dissonance, using sequential mediation models that measure alternative mechanisms, such as a desire to regain control over their jobs (reactance theory; Brehm & Brehm, 1981) or take revenge for unmet expectations (social exchange theory; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Second, our consideration of performance-oriented work climates as buffers was guided by prior research that points to the critical role of stimulating work environments in replenishing employees' energy (Menguc et al., 2017). It would be helpful to investigate other contextual factors with similar beneficial roles, such as high-performance work systems that establish *consistent* human resource policies, instead of focusing on performance in general (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017), as well as procedural justice (Kim & Beehr, 2020), job autonomy (Llopis & Foss, 2016), or organizational commitment (Hensel & Kacprzak, 2020). In addition, energy-enhancing *personal* factors may protect employees from the risk that conflicting emotions translate into a sense of organizational underappreciation and diminished change-oriented OCB. Key resources might include their passion for work (Haq et al., 2019), resilience (Kimura et al.,

2018), or proactive personality (Pan et al., 2018). A related research path then could compare the relative effects of each contextual and personal factor, as well as determine whether the beneficial role of performance-oriented work climates remains after accounting for these effects.

Third, the empirical research context is one country, the UAE. To reiterate, the conceptual arguments that underpin the tested relationships are country-neutral, so we do not expect that the signs of these relationships vary across countries—but their strength might, according to pertinent cultural factors. As we reasoned (see the “Relevance of the study context” subsection), in countries marked by high levels of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, or collectivism, employees may be particularly likely to respond to conflicts between felt and organizationally desired emotions with negative beliefs and work-related complacency, as well as to leverage performance-oriented work climates in ways that mitigate these responses. The UAE scores high on all three cultural factors, which makes it highly relevant for studying the focal research phenomena. Cross-country studies in turn might *compare* the possible influences of these and other macro-level factors. A complementary approach might investigate the roles of individual features too, such as employees’ own risk, power distance, or collectivistic orientations (Chow et al., 2012; Yang, 2020).

Conclusion

This study documents hitherto unexplored roles of organizational underappreciation and performance-oriented work climates in transforming emotional dissonance into diminished change-oriented OCB. Complaints about being an undervalued organizational member are critical channels through which conflicting emotions render employees reluctant to contribute to their employer’s success with extra-role activities designed to improve the status quo. This harmful process can be stopped though if employees feel energized by stimulating work contexts

that encourage them to excel. We hope these insights will be leveraged further in continued examinations of how the risk that fake emotions escalate in work-related apathy can be mitigated by energy-boosting work conditions.

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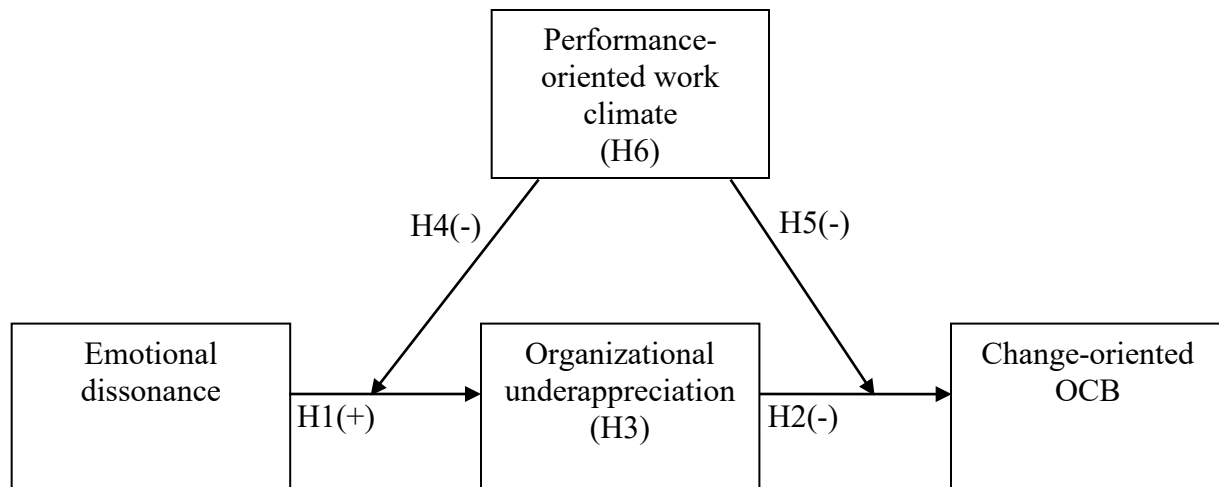
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Figure 1: Conceptual model.



Notes: H3 refers to the mediating role of organizational underappreciation and H6 to the moderated mediating role of performance-oriented work climate.

Table 1: Correlation table and descriptive statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Emotional dissonance						
2. Organizational underappreciation	.198**					
3. Change-oriented OCB	.044	-.321**				
4. Performance-oriented work climate	.321**	-.069	.225**			
5. Gender (1 = female)	.038	.062	-.090	-.124*		
6. Organizational tenure	.079	-.146*	.078	.072	-.134*	
Mean	4.382	2.052	5.968	4.590	.169	8.063
Standard deviation	1.356	.933	.858	1.275	.375	6.993

Notes: n = 284.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Mediation results (Process macro)

	Organizational underappreciation		Change-oriented OCB	
Gender (1 = female)		.036		-.112
Organizational tenure		-.021**		.001
Emotional dissonance		.175***		.031
Performance-oriented work climate		-.101*		.122**
Organizational underappreciation				-.289***
	R ²	.083		.149
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
Indirect effect	-.050	.019	-.094	-.018

Notes: n = 284; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

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

Table 3. Moderated mediation results (Process macro)

	Organizational underappreciation	Change-oriented OCB		
Gender (1 = female)	.071	-.143		
Organizational tenure	-.020**	.003		
Emotional dissonance	.183***	.041		
Performance-oriented work climate	-.101*	.124**		
Emotional dissonance × Performance-oriented work climate	-.071*			
Organizational underappreciation		-.282***		
Organizational underappreciation × Performance-oriented work climate		.119**		
R ²	.101	.173		
Conditional <i>direct</i> effect of emotional dissonance on organizational underappreciation				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	.278	.061	.158	.399
Mean	.189	.042	.107	.272
+1SD	.083	.057	-.030	.196
Conditional <i>direct</i> effect of organizational underappreciation on change-oriented OCB				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.442	.075	-.590	-.294
Mean	-.293	.053	-.397	-.190
+1SD	-.114	.081	-.273	.045
Conditional <i>indirect</i> effect of emotional dissonance on change-oriented OCB				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.123	.045	-.222	-.047
Mean	-.056	.019	-.096	-.022
+1SD	-.009	.010	-.032	.007

Notes: n = 284; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

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

Appendix: Measurement items

Emotional dissonance

- My work situation requires me to express emotions that vary with those I actually feel.
- I experience a discrepancy between the emotions that I express to be professional and what I feel.
- The emotions that I feel in my job do not correspond to these I would like to feel.
- The emotions I show in order to be professional are not in phase with my inner feelings.

Organizational underappreciation (reverse coded)

- The way my organization functions makes me feel like I am an important part of this place.
- The way my organization functions makes me feel like there is faith in me around here.
- The ways that my organization functions make me feel like I count around here.
- The ways that my organization functions make me feel like I am trusted around here.
- The ways that my organization functions make me feel like I make a difference around here.

Change-oriented citizenship behavior

- I often suggest changes to unproductive rules or policies.
- I often suggest work improvement ideas to others.
- I frequently come up with new ideas or new work methods to perform my task.
- I often change the way I work to improve efficiency.

Performance-oriented work climate

- The amount of recognition you get in this company depends on how you perform compared to others.
- Organizational authorities frequently compare my performance with that of my coworkers.
- Everybody is concerned with being the top performer.
- Organizational authorities subject me to strict performance evaluations.