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# Impact of Organization Cynicism on Work Outcomes: Mediating Role of Work Alienation

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## ABSTRACT

A limited study has been conducted on the relationship between organizational cynicism and work outcomes in the area of management and organizational behavior. The purpose of this study was to investigate the main effects of organizational cynicism on job stress and employee performance. This study also examined the mediating role of work alienation a mechanism through which organizational cynicism affects different employee negative as well as positive outcomes. This study is based on the well-known theory of Cognitive appraisal theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to justify the relationship of the proposed research model. The study collected data from the employee (n=350) working in the manufacturing and service sector of Pakistan. A Cross-sectional time lag research design was used for data collection in this study. The finding revealed that organizational cynicism is positively related to job stress and negatively related to job performance. Complete support was found for all hypotheses. Moreover, the findings further demonstrated that work alienation mediated the relationship between organizational cynicism and work outcomes. Support was found for all direct and indirect mediation effects.

**Keywords:** Organizational Cynicism, Work Alienation, Job Stress, Job Performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays Organizations are facing serious problems related to cynicism because it has considered the main factor due to which the reputation of the organization goes down. Organizational cynicism is “a negative attitude toward one’s employer, comprising three dimensions: a belief that the organization lacks integrity; negative affect towards the organization; and tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward

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### Article info

Received Nov 27, 2017  
Accepted June 23, 2018  
Published June 30, 2018

the organization that is consistent with these beliefs and affect.” (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998, p. 345).

Another influential definition of organizational cynicism comes from Andersson (1996) who thinks that cynicism “can be defined best as both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution,” (p. 1397-1398).

Have Organizational cynicism have so many elements, some at the individual level while some at the organizational level. The most important one is the wrong management task (Wanous et al., 1994), no job satisfaction and lack of commitment (Nafei, 2013), high dismissal, low wages and low organizational performance (Andersson and Bateman, 1997), psychological agreement invasion (Johnson and O’leary-Kelly, 2003; Aydin Tükeltürk et al., 2013), high role conflict (Naus et al., 2007), low organizational support (Kasalak and Aksu, 2014) and mistrust (Özler and Atalay, 2011). Some studies results revealed that experience in the industry is closely related with and dependent on organizational cynicism (Nafei, 2013; Aydin Tükeltürk et al., 2013, and Aksu, 2014). Akin (2015) results revealed that there was a negative relationship between organizational cynicism and trust factor in the education sector.

Acaray, A., Yildirim, S (2017) found that there is positive as well as the negative relationship between different personality traits of an individual with organizational cynicism. Another study found that cynicism is a psychological threat that moderates and predicts the likelihood that negative relations at the workplace will actively engage employees’ intention to leave the organization and give rise to other negative outcomes. Biswas, S., Kapil, K (2017) also found a negative relation between organizational cynicism and in-role performance.

In social sciences work, alienation is considered as an applied concept, and it originated during an industrialization era from the Karl Marx work (Marx & Rowbotham, 1994). “Work alienation is a cognitive and social condition in which the person becomes disconnected and estranged at his/her inner self” (Tummers & den Dulk, 2011, p.105). Thus, alienation is defined as “an agent of dehumanization, by which the worker becomes

an object responding to work rather than an influential subject capable of fulfilling himself/herself at work” (Sookoo, 2014). Those employees who become victims of alienation attract towards external rewards (money) as compared to their job they are more divert toward quitting their job (Abraham, 2000).

Once an employee become cynical than his/her behavior lead to work alienation within an organization's and the quality of human relations, modernization level of the organization perception of social benefit about the organization, the degree of being job-oriented and easiness level of the job causes the employees to get alienated (Çetin et al., 2009). The literature has an insufficient answer to the question regarding whether the phenomenon of organizational cynicism, which expresses negative attitudes of employees towards the organization (Dean et al., 1998).

Moreover, this area even lacks to explain some underlying mechanism that why employees become more stressed and show lower performance. Recent studies on Organizational Cynicism also demands to examine its antecedents and outcomes in the workplace, particularly environment (Chiaburu, D. S., Peng, A. C., Oh, I. S., Banks, G. C., & Lomeli, L. C. (2013). Another recent study by Saeed et al., (2017) also have found that organizational cynicism has a significant and positive relationship with job stress and negative relation with employee performance, this study suggests further research work which is highly needed to be conducted such as work alienation can be used as a mechanism through which cynicism lead to different work outcomes. Organizational cynicism might be developed due to mistreatments by the supervisor or organization and this negative attitude give rise to stress and non-productive behaviors. Conway, E., Monks, K., Fu, N., Alfes, K., & Bailey, K. (2018) worked on alienation with work frame of employee time completion that, when an employee gets alienated from work, consequently, the performance of the whole organization becomes slowdown. They also suggested that there is something negative behind employee alienation such as the abusive behavior of the supervisor, organizational cynicism, and workplace bullying. Another research also found that when fairness is not enough within the organization then employee become cynic which leads to different negative outcomes (Sharma, D. 2018), he also suggested that this cynical attitude of employees lead to work alienation which

further enhances the negative outcomes of the employee. One of the recent studies of Akar, H. (2018) also found that employee commitment and citizenship behavior is decreased due to work alienation, this study suggests that employee work alienation and burnout develop because of the negative behavior of the supervisor and organizational unfair decision which leads to employee cynicism.

The main purpose of this study is to improve the understanding of the mechanisms by which organizational cynicism impacts followers' work outcomes. This research extends the transactional theory of stress by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) proposing a mediation model to investigate the negative attributes of organizational cynicism on the follower's negative outcomes.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Organizational Cynicism with work alienation, job performance, and job stress

Organizational cynicism and work alienation are the two most important factors of organization and there are very few studies have been conducted on the relationship between these two factors indirectly. Abraham (2000) results revealed that organizational cynicism has a positive association with alienation and business dissatisfaction; there is a negative relation of different positive outcomes such as employee performance, innovative behavior, job satisfaction with organizational cynicism. According to Turan (2011: 127), "one of the negative effects of organizational cynicism is alienation and as the level of organizational cynicism increases, the level of work alienation increases as well". According to Andersson (1996), on the other hand, alienation could be related to cynicism. Kartal, N. (2018) conducted a study on the relationship of work alienation with work engagement and performance in the healthcare sector and found the negative relation of work alienation with these outcomes. This study also found that the mindset of the employee developed toward work alienation is because of employee cynical behavior. Another recent study also found that alienation in the higher education sector arises due to corporate abuse and negative leader behavior (Oleksiyenko, A. 2018).

Organizational cynicism takes place when employees think that their

organization is lacking integrity (Johnson, L. And Anne M.O'leary-Kelly, 2003). When employees experience that the organization is concerned with the well-being of its workers, they are less likely to experience, or engage in deviance (Iranzadeh, S. and F. Chakherlouy, 2011, Safarzadeh, H., A. Tadayon, N. Jalalyan, Y.Salamzadeh and M. Daraei, 2012), and conversely, the organizations in which individuals were primarily concerned with caring for their own wellbeing were more likely to suffer from deviance (Peterson, D., 2002). Saeed et al., (2017) found a significant relationship between cynicism and work outcomes like job stress and job performance.

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and work alienation*

*H<sub>2a</sub>: There is a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and job stress*

*H<sub>2b</sub>: There is a negative relationship between organizational cynicism and job performance*

## **2.2. Work Alienation as a Mediator between Organizational Cynicism and outcomes**

Recent studies on Organizational Cynicism also demand to examine its antecedents and outcomes in the workplace particularly the leadership behaviors (Chiaburu, D. S., Peng, A. C., Oh, I. S., Banks, G. C., & Lomeli, L. C. (2013). Organizational cynicism may be developed due to mistreatments by the supervisor and this negative attitude give rise to stress, deviant, aggressive and non-productive behaviors.

The meta-analysis of Dan et al., (2013), advocate that since an inadequate number of longitudinal studies are in our dataset, the future investigation is necessary to launch with more precision the causality of the associations. The absence of information from primary studies also precluded testing more complex models, involving mediating and moderating mechanisms, or models with a longer causal chain (e.g., cynicism to different work outcomes; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Chia, S., & Kee, D. (2018) found that workplace bullying negatively affects task performance of employees when employee face bullying behavior of supervisor then it is harmful to employees as well for the organization, negative appraisal in the form of cynicism arises which lead to negative outcomes. Organizational health can be affected by alienation

which creates problems in an organization at the end low performance and higher stress developed (Özer, Ö., Uğurluoğlu, Ö., Saygılı, M., & Songur, C. 2017).

Brondolo, E., Eftekharzadeh, P., Clifton, C., Schwartz, J. E., & Delahanty, D. (2017) investigated work related trauma and its results revealed that cynicism is the most important work related trauma which arises from the organization side or from ultimate supervisor side which creates alienation among employees and at the end create harmful results like negative performance, low OCB, high stress, high turnover.

**H<sub>3a</sub>:** *Work alienation mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and job stress*

**H<sub>3b</sub>:** *Work alienation mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and job performance*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the current study to explore the impact of organizational cynicism on employee work outcomes with mediating role of work alienation. Employees working in the service sector and manufacturing sector were considered the population of study whereas data was collected from Peshawar, and twin cities. The total population of service and manufacturing sector of Pakistan was unknown, the current study used convenient sampling technique which is a type of non-probability sampling technique. The study design is based on a time lagged approach. IV (organizational cynicism) measured at T1, whereas work alienation was measured at time 2 with a time lag of one month, at time 3, the dependent variables, i.e. job stress, and job performance were measured with a lag of one month. Organizational cynicism, work alienation, and stress is self-reported whereas job performance is peer reported to address the reporting biases. A total of 500 questionnaires were rotated out of which 370 questionnaires were returned back. But some of the questionnaires were not properly filled and remove those questionnaires at the end 350 questionnaires were left on which analysis was done.

This research employs a quantitative design technique by using the survey method. The survey questionnaires were designed on the basis of previously verified scales. As all the study variables are based on perceptions and behaviors of individual employees, it required the gathering of data from full time employees across various

organizations.

### 3.1. Measurement

Organizational cynicism was measured with 12 items scale developed by Dean et al., (1998) the alpha reliability for this scale was  $\alpha = .90$ . Job stress was measured through 5-items scale developed by Parker, D. F., & Decotiis, T. A. (1983) the alpha reliability value was  $\alpha = .76$ . William and Anderson (1991) 7-item scale was used to measure job performance in this study the reliability of job performance was  $\alpha = .70$ . Work alienation was measured on the scale developed by Hirschfeld et al. (2000). It includes 8 items. This scale is adapted by Maddi's (1979) scale.

### 3.2. Data Analysis technique

In this study, the analysis was done through AMOS 20 and SPSS 21 software package. Incomplete questionnaires were removed from the data before going to perform the analysis. A total of 350 complete questionnaires were entered into the SPSS 21 package for data analysis.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table no 1 show the means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values of the different demographic variables used in this study. Data was collected from two different sectors i.e service sector and manufacturing sector. The respondents who participated in this study are about 68.5% (233) male in numbers while 31.5% (107) are females; it shows the positive involvement of females in organizations compared to most of the previous studies conducted in Pakistan (Raja et al., 2004). Ninety percent (90.6%) respondents of this study had completed their master's degree equivalent to 16 years of education, 9.4% were graduate have 18 years of education. About 12.1% were managerial staff, 13.8% at deputy manager post, 15.6 are operation managers, 15.6% were assistant managers, 15.6% were credit officers, 13.5% were cash officer and 13.8% were at office assistant positions. Sixty-two points were from the service sector while 37.6% were from the manufacturing sector.

In this chapter table, no 1 provides the results of descriptive statistics and

correlation analysis for all the study variables. The means for Organizational Cynicism at time 1 were (M= 1.63, SD= .59), Work alienation (M= 1.81, SD= .32), Job Stress at time 3 (M= 2.82, SD= .40) and Job Performance at Peer level (M= 3.61, SD= .38).

#### 4.2. Correlation Analysis

Regarding the associations of the independent variable with outcomes as well with mediator variable, Organizational Cynicism was positively and significantly associations with Job stress at time 3 ( $r = .23$ ), Job Performance at peer level ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Work alienation at peer level (.19,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table-1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among Variables.**

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age														
Gender	1.62	.51	-.37**											
Education	3.09	.49	.32**	-.38**										
Tenure	1.48	.51	.59**	-.05	.35**									
Job Nature	1.20	.40	.45**	-.70**	.64**	.08								
Sector	1.39	.49	-.31**	.12*	-.18**	-.24**	-.26**							
Nature of Organization	1.61	.51	-.21**	.41**	-.33**	-.25**	-.05	-.08						
Tenure Current	1.29	.46	.26**	-.33**	.44**	.26**	.21**	-.03	-.60**					
Organizational Cynicism (T1)	1.63	.59	-.01	-.12*	.12*	.09	.20**	.14**	.03	.11*	(.90)			
Job Performance (T3)	3.61	.38	.01	-.01	.01	-.01	-.06	-.05	-.03	-.02	-.29**	(.70)		
Work Alienation (T2)	1.81	.32	-.12*	-.03	.01	-.07	.04	.11*	.04	-.02	.13*	-.07	(.70)	
Job Stress (T3)	2.82	.40	-.00	-.02	-.04	-.05	-.02	.01	-.02	-.04	.10	-.37**	.02	(.77)

Note: N=350, Demographic variables are age, gender, education, tenure, job nature, sector, nature of organization and tenure with current supervisor; for Gender 1= 'Male' and 2= 'Female'; T1= Time 1; T2= Time 2; T3= Time 3. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 4.3. Direct Effect of Organizational Cynicism on work alienation

Hypotheses 1 predicted that organizational cynicism is positively related to work alienation. The structural model fit diagram for H1 is shown in figure 1. The model fit statistics for structural model testing of direct effect of organizational cynicism Time 1 self-reported on work alienation Time 2 self-reported i.e (chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) =268.066, degree of freedom (df) = 59, CMIN/DF=4.101, comparative fit index (CFI)= .953, normed fit index (NFI)= .942, tucker lewis index (TLI)= .913, goodness-of-fit-index (GFI)= .921, Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)= .815, Root mean square Residual



(RMR)= .053, and root mean square error of approximation( RMSEA)= .084) shows that over all direct effect model good fit.

Figure 1 contained the unstandardized regression coefficient for the proposed model. Beta is coefficient is significant at 0.01. The results revealed that 38% increase is occurred due to organizational cynicism. The unstandardized coefficient path shows the positive and significant relationship between Organizational cynicism Time 1 self-reported and works alienation Time 2 self-reported ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus the results of this study fully support hypotheses 1.

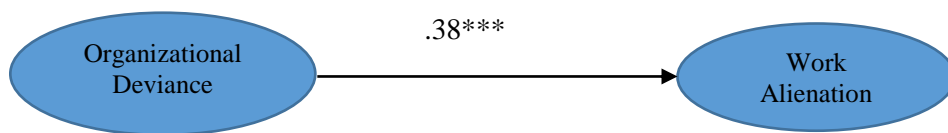
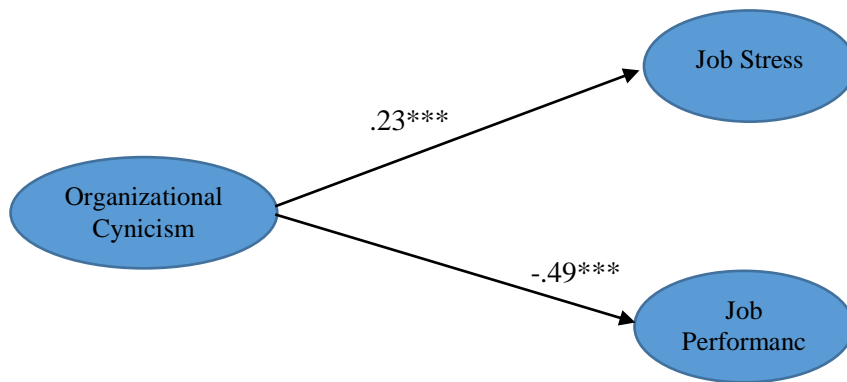


Figure 1. Model Showing Organizational Cynicism Direct Relationship to Work Alienation

#### 4.4. Direct Effect of Organizational Cynicism on Work Outcomes (Job Stress and Job Performance)

Hypotheses 2 (a, and b) predicted that organizational cynicism Time 1 self-reported is positively related to job stress Time 3 self-reported, and negatively related to job performance Time 3 peer reported respectively. The structural model showed good fit i.e. (chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 1435.095, degree of freedom (df) = 578, CMIN/DF=2.483, comparative fit index (CFI)= .889, normed fit index (NFI)= .834, tucker lewis index (TLI)= .859, goodness-of-fit-index (GFI)= .848, Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)= .791, Root mean square Residual (RMR)= .034, and root mean square error of approximation( RMSEA)= .063).

Figure 2 contained the unstandardized regression coefficient path for organizational cynicism Time 1 self-reported with job stress Time 3 self-reported and job performance Time 3 peer reported. The results indicate that 23% increase occurred in job stress due to organizational cynicism at 0.01 level of significance and -49% decrease occurred in job performance due to organizational performance at 0.01 level of significance. Thus hypotheses H2 (a and b) fully supported.



**Figure 2. Model Showing Organizational Cynicism Direct Relationship to Work Outcomes (Job Stress, and Job Performance)**

Table 2 unstandardized Regression Weights of Paths in the proposed Model			
	Proposed causal association	$\beta$	P
<b>H<sub>1</sub></b>	Organizational cynicism $\Rightarrow$ Work Alienation	.38	0.001
<b>H<sub>2a</sub></b>	Organizational cynicism $\Rightarrow$ Job Stress	.23	0.001
<b>H<sub>2b</sub></b>	Organizational cynicism $\Rightarrow$ Job Performance	-.49	0.001

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

#### 4.5. Mediation Model (Indirect Model)

##### 4.5.1. A path model of Work Alienation as a mediator between Organizational cynicism and Work outcomes (Job stress and Job Performance)

Hypothesis H3a and H3b predicted that Work alienation acts as a mediator between organizational cynicism and Work Outcomes (Job stress, Job Performance). The structural model diagram for H3a and H3b shown in figure 3. The structural model fit statistics testing the mediating effect of Work alienation between Organizational Cynicism and Work Outcomes i.e (chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) =2113.992, degree of freedom (df) = 786, CMIN/DF=2.690, comparative fit index (CFI)= .878, normed fit index (NFI)= .819, tucker Lewis index (TLI)= .848, goodness-of-fit index (GFI)= .807, Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)= .748, Root mean square Residual (RMR)= .050, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)= .071).

Fully mediation model showed that the path from self-reported organizational

cynicism at Time 1 to self-reported work alienation at Time 2 ( $\beta=.57$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) was positive and significant. Furthermore, the structural path from self-reported work alienation at Time 2 to self-reported job stress at Time3 was positive and significant ( $\beta=.23$ ,  $P<0.001$ ), whereas for peer reported job performance at Time 3 ( $\beta= -.17$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) was negative and significantly associated, Thus the mediation hypothesis for work alienation (H3a and H3b) between organizational cynicism and work outcomes was fully supported for job stress and job performance.

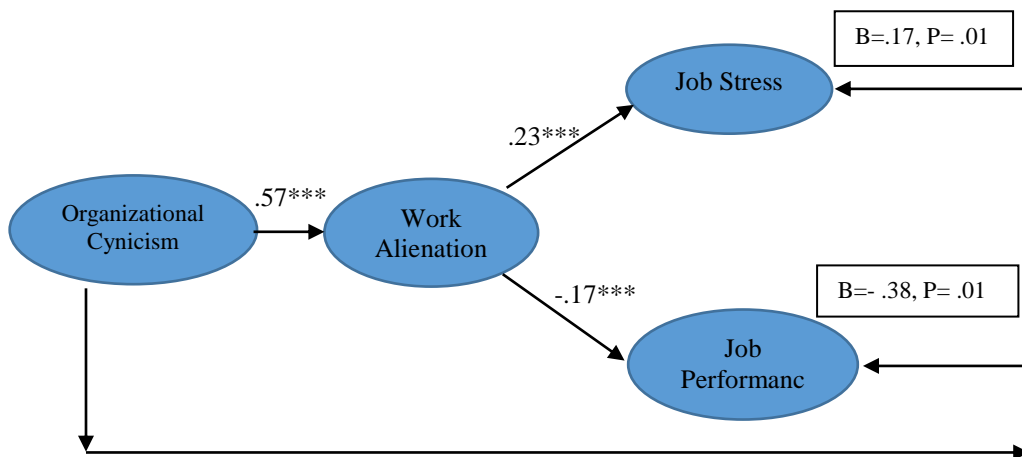


Figure 3. A path model of work alienation as a mediator between organizational cynicism and Work outcomes (Job stress and Job Performance)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The current study investigates the impact of organizational cynicism on work outcomes through the underlying mechanism of work alienation. Hypothesis 1 suggested that organizational cynicism is positively related to work alienation. The results of SEM provide full support for this hypothesis. Hypothesis 2a, 2b states that there is a positive relationship between work alienation and job stress and negative relations with job performance. The finding of the study shows that there is a positive association between organizational cynicism and job stress and negative association with job performance, thus hypothesis was accepted. In the previous section, all direct hypothesis was confirmed and accordingly matched direct or indirect with previous results. This section

discusses the mediation effect of work alienation between organizational cynicism and work outcomes hypothesis. H3a suggested that work alienation mediate the relationship between organizational cynicism and job stress. The results revealed that work alienation fully mediates the relationship between organizational cynicism and job stress. H3b contended that work alienation acts as a mediator between organizational cynicism and job performance. The SEM results revealed that work alienation mediated the relationship of organizational cynicism and job performance. Thus this study indicates that hypothesis H3 (a and b) i.e work alienation mediated the relationship between organizational cynicism aversive and work outcomes (job stress and job performance), was fully supported. The results of the study are according with the past studies which indicated that organizational cynicism has negative relations with positive work outcomes and positive relations with negative work outcomes (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Burton & Hoobler, 2006; Ashforth 1994), self-efficacy (Duffy, Ganster, Pagon, 2002) and social competency (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007); increased anti-citizenship behaviors (Ball, Trevino, & Sims, 1994); increased tension, anger, resistance and avoidance, and lowered performance goals (Baron, 1988); decreased job and life satisfaction, normative and affective commitment, and increased work-family conflict, turnover intentions and psychological distress (Tepper, 2000); and decreased performance and work unit cohesiveness, as well as increased frustration, stress, reactance, helplessness and work alienation (Ashforth, 1994).

The current study is unique in the senses that it employs a prominent theoretical approach in the domain of stress literature that is Cognitive Appraisal theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as used in the overarching theoretical paradigms to rationalize the theoretical foundations of the proposed research model link. This theory provides a solid reasoning and develops logical justifications for proposed research model relationship and extension of theory as well.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

The organization cannot compete in the global market until their internal environment is not good. Organizational cynicism and work alienation have become an

interesting topic for scholars as well as for academicism as it leads to different negative work outcomes which create harmful results for the organization. This study finds that organizational with alienation as a mediating mechanism lead to positive as well as negative outcomes. The results of the current study revealed that organizational cynicism increases work alienation which leads to the low performance of the employee and high job stress.

### **Study limitations and future research directions**

This study consists of few limitations as well as some strong directions or contribution in the domain of organizational cynicism, as in other research there are weaknesses as well, which can be removed by future researchers. The first limitation of this study is while using longitudinal research design i.e data were collected at more than one time periods which cannot be categorized as a full longitudinal design as the entire research model variables were not selected at all three different time points. This study as categorized and collected data at 3 different time intervals as the independent variable organizational cynicism was measured at Time 1, and mediator variables work alienation was measured at Time 2, while all dependent variables i.e job stress, and job performance was measured at Time 3. Researchers in future can use complete longitudinal design containing more than one time intervals, where all variables of the research model are employed at all the different time periods.

Second, in this study, although a cross-sectional design at different time intervals with a suitable time period was used, however, all the variables data were collected from a different source at different times. At time1 organizational cynicism, data was collected by using the self-rated method, at time 2 mediator variable work alienation data was also collected through the self-rated method and at time 3 peer rated data collection approach was used only for job performance but for job stress a self-rated approach was used. The findings of the study revealed that factor analysis for full CFA model as well as for alternate models executed in one time containing satisfactory factor loadings of the items of the related concept, and discriminant and convergent validity results indicate that self-report as well peer reported measure are not a main issue to the study results. Future research studies need to measure dependent variables investigated in this study on the

supervisory rating approach.

Lastly, the current study found support for all direct and indirect mediation hypotheses. Future research may examine other moderator variables like personality traits, core self-evaluation, emotional intelligence etc. Finally, future research can examine the suggested research model in other collectivist culture as well as in developing countries context to substantiate the above overall results in a culture like Pakistan. The main purpose of this study is to improve the understanding of the mechanisms by which organizational cynicism impacts followers' work outcomes. This research extends the transactional theory of stress by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

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