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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND ENERGY DYNAMICS: HOW LEADERSHIP SHAPES ENERGY INTENSITY AND QUALITY

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Abstract

This paper builds a theoretical and empirical case for treating organizational energy intensity and quality as two separate and distinct variables a distinction first proposed by Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) and later measured by Cole, Bruch, and Vogel (2012). Using Colquitt's (2001) four-part model of organizational justice, the paper argues that distributive justice and procedural justice are the main structural drivers of energy intensity, while interpersonal justice and informational justice shape energy quality. Leadership behaviour including transformational and transactional styles (Bass, 1985) is identified as the key mechanism through which employees form their sense of fairness, and through which organizational energy zones are created, maintained, or broken down. Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Blau, 1964) provides the relational framework that connects leadership actions to collective energy outcomes. The paper presents an integrated model, eight testable propositions, practical guidance for leaders, and an agenda for future research. Its central finding is this: productive organizational energy achieving both high intensity and positive quality at the same time is first a matter of fairness, and only then a matter of performance.

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Introduction: -

Why Intensity and Quality Must Be Treated Separately: -

The key insight behind this paper is Bruch and Ghoshal's (2003) argument that energy intensity (how strongly an organization is activated) and energy quality (whether that activation is positive or negative) are two different things. This is not just a matter of classification it is a claim about how organizations actually work. The forces that determine how energized a group of people is are fundamentally different from the forces that determine whether that energy is directed positively or negatively. When leaders treat these two dimensions as one, serious mistakes follow. A leadership approach that uses fear to create urgency may increase intensity while severely damaging quality, pushing an organization from productive energy into corrosive energy. A warm and supportive culture may preserve positive quality while letting urgency fade, producing a pleasant but strategically stagnant state called comfortable energy. Yet no existing framework has fully explained why intensity and quality respond to different

mechanisms, or how leadership acts on each one specifically. This paper provides that explanation through organizational justice theory specifically Colquitt's (2001) four-part model, which builds on foundational work by Adams (1965), Thibaut and Walker (1975), Leventhal (1980), Bies and Moag (1986), and Greenberg (1993). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) explains the relational process through which perceptions of fairness are converted into collective energy outcomes. Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and Fairness Heuristic Theory (Lind, 2001) explain the psychological mechanisms through which employees translate fairness experiences into the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural states that make up organizational energy.

**Organizational Energy: Intensity and Quality as Two Separate Constructs: -
What Is Organizational Energy? -**

Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) defined organizational energy as 'the force with which a company functions' using the word 'force' deliberately, in a physical rather than metaphorical sense. Their research at companies including Lufthansa, Conoco, and ABB showed that organizations differ not simply in how hard they work, but in the very nature of their collective activation. Cole, Bruch, and Vogel (2012) made this concept more precisely measurable, defining productive organizational energy (POE) as the shared experience and outward expression of positive emotion, mental engagement, and purposeful action among team members working toward organizational goals. Their rigorous four-study validation confirmed POE as a genuine collective construct one that predicts unit-level effectiveness beyond what individual-level predictors alone can explain comprising three components: emotional, cognitive, and behavioural energy.

The Two-Dimensional Structure: Intensity and Quality:-

Bruch and Vogel (2011) organized the different states of organizational energy along two axes: intensity (the degree of collective activation) and quality (whether that activation is positive or negative). These two axes combine to produce four distinct energy zones, shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Organizational Energy Matrix (adapted from Bruch & Vogel, 2011)

Dimension	High Intensity	Low Intensity	Justice Driver
Positive Quality	PRODUCTIVE ENERGY (Target zone)	COMFORTABLE ENERGY (Complacency trap)	Interpersonal + Informational Justice
Negative Quality	CORROSIVE ENERGY (Fear/anger driven)	RESIGNED INERTIA (Withdrawal trap)	Procedural + Distributive Justice (deficit)
Justice Driver	Distributive + Procedural Justice	Justice Deficit (all types)	Leadership is proximate cause

The critical point and the starting premise of this paper is that intensity and quality do not move in the same direction automatically. They are driven by different antecedents, respond to different leadership actions, and can move in opposite directions in response to the same leadership intervention. This independence reflects fundamentally different psychological processes governing how strongly people are activated versus whether that activation feels positive or negative.

What Makes Up Productive Energy, and How It Operates Across Levels:-

Cole et al.'s (2012) three components fit naturally within the intensity-quality framework. Emotional energy contributes mainly to quality, through enthusiasm and positive engagement. Cognitive energy shared mental alertness directed toward common goals supports both dimensions, adding to intensity while keeping that activation purposeful. Behavioural energy collective effort and stamina is the primary expression of intensity. Baker's (2019) multilevel model confirmed that energy operates at the level of individuals, pairs, teams, and the whole organization

simultaneously, with leadership behaviour being the main mechanism through which energy is transferred between levels. Fairness perceptions formed through individual interactions with leaders are spread through the organization via social contagion (Barsade, 2002) and shared interpretation patterns, gradually building into collective energy states.

Organizational Justice Theory: A Structured Overview: -

How the Field Developed:-

Organizational justice the study of how employees perceive fairness at work was formally introduced by Greenberg (1987), drawing on foundational work in distributive justice (Adams, 1965) and procedural justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Leventhal (1980) expanded procedural justice by identifying six criteria for fair processes: consistency, suppression of bias, accuracy, representativeness, and ethical soundness. Bies and Moag (1986) identified interactional justice the quality of interpersonal treatment during the execution of procedures and Greenberg (1993) later divided this into interpersonal justice (treating people with dignity and respect) and informational justice (providing adequate, honest explanations). Colquitt (2001) confirmed this four-part structure through the most comprehensive measurement validation study to date, reviewing 183 justice investigations.

The Four Dimensions:-

Distributive Justice:-(Adams, 1965) concerns whether outcomes pay, promotions, recognition, and task assignments are perceived as fair. Employees evaluate this by comparing their input-to-outcome ratio with those of comparable colleagues. A meta-analysis of 190 studies by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) found strong links between distributive justice and job satisfaction ($\rho = .56$).

Procedural Justice:-(Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980) concerns whether the processes used to determine outcomes are perceived as fair. Colquitt et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis found that procedural justice is the strongest predictor of organizational commitment ($\rho = .45$), organizational citizenship behaviour ($\rho = .41$), and trust outcomes that directly reflect sustained energy intensity.

Interpersonal Justice:-(Bies&Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993) concerns whether employees are treated with dignity and respect. Bies (1987) described 'moral outrage' the intense negative emotional reaction caused by disrespectful treatment showing that interpersonal violations trigger a qualitatively different, and more powerful, response than mere disappointment over outcomes.

Informational Justice :-(Greenberg, 1993) concerns whether explanations given about decisions and procedures are timely, complete, and honest. Shaw, Wild, and Colquitt (2003) found that adequate explanations reduce negative reactions to unfavourable outcomes by 43% a striking finding suggesting that the emotional damage of difficult decisions can be substantially limited through honest communication alone, even without changing the decision itself.

Why Each Dimension Is an Independent Predictor:-

Colquitt's (2001) structural equation modelling confirmed that each justice dimension makes its own unique contribution to outcomes, over and above the other three. Masterson et al. (2000) and Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) showed that procedural and interactional justice operate through different mediating paths: procedural justice works through perceived organizational support (POS), affecting outcomes tied to the organization as a whole; interactional justice works through leader-member exchange (LMX) quality, affecting outcomes tied specifically to the supervisor relationship. This split in pathways is the empirical foundation for the paper's central mapping of justice dimensions onto energy outcomes.

The Core Mapping: Justice Dimensions as Drivers of Intensity and Quality: -

Table 2 presents the paper's main theoretical contribution: a systematic mapping of each justice dimension to its primary energy outcome, its positive mechanism when present, and its consequences for energy when violated.

Table 2: Justice Dimensions as Independent Determinants of Energy Intensity and Quality

Justice Dimension	Energy Variable	Positive Mechanism	When Violated → Energy Effect
Distributive Justice (Adams, 1965)	Energy INTENSITY	Equity motivation; effort is calibrated against perceived fairness of outcomes	Disengagement, withdrawal of effort, resigned inertia
Procedural Justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980)	Energy INTENSITY	Builds organizational trust and commitment; perceived support from organization; sustains engagement	Cynicism, reduced citizenship behaviour, low commitment, corrosive or resigned energy engagement
Interpersonal Justice (Bies&Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993)	Energy QUALITY	Dignified treatment generates positive emotion; activates broadening psychological resources	Corrosive energy; moral outrage, resentment, burnout, emotional exhaustion
Informational Justice (Greenberg, 1993)	Energy QUALITY	Honest information creates cognitive trust; reduces defensive thinking	Corrosive energy; rumour, cynicism, distrust, withdrawal

Distributive Justice and Energy Intensity:-

Adams's (1965) equity theory established that employees monitor their input-to-outcome ratio compared to similar others, and that a sense of under-reward motivates them to reduce their inputs in response. In organizational energy terms, this reduction translates directly into lower behavioural intensity. This operates through expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964): people invest effort when they believe that effort will be rewarded fairly. Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) confirmed strong links between distributive justice and job satisfaction, while Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) connected distributive injustice to emotional exhaustion a depletion of emotional resources that signals a collapse in energy intensity. Importantly, these effects are primarily about intensity: an employee who feels underpaid may remain positive in their interpersonal conduct (quality remains intact) while systematically reducing their behavioural effort (intensity falls).

Procedural Justice and Energy Intensity:-

Procedural justice builds organizational trust the belief that the system is reliable, that future outcomes will be fair even when current ones disappoint, and that consistent rules will apply tomorrow as today. This systemic trust converts occasional effort into sustained behavioural intensity. Colquitt et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis showed procedural justice to be a stronger predictor of organizational commitment ($\rho = .45$) and citizenship behaviour ($\rho = .41$) than distributive justice, and this operates through perceived organizational support (Masterson et al., 2000; Eisenberger et al., 1986): fair processes signal to employees that the organization values their contribution, activating the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and maintaining high engagement. When procedures are unfair when rules are applied inconsistently or employees have no voice the implicit message this sends leads to withdrawal of the sustained commitment that underlies intensity.

Interpersonal Justice and Energy Quality:-

Interpersonal justice affects quality through Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996): specific interpersonal events trigger emotional reactions that accumulate over time into stable mood states and broader orientations. Violations rudeness, dismissiveness, condescension, public humiliation trigger what Bies (1987) called 'moral outrage': an identity-threatening reaction that persists well after the event and colours how employees interpret future organizational situations. Through emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002; Kelly & Barsade, 2001),

individually experienced interpersonal injustice spreads into collective negative energy. Ndjaboue, Brisson, and Vezina (2012) confirmed associations between interactional injustice and psychological distress, burnout, and declining health all signs of quality degradation. On the positive side, consistent dignified treatment generates positive emotion that, according to Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, accumulates durable psychological resources that form the foundation of high-quality energy.

Informational Justice and Energy Quality:-

Informational justice operates through cognitive appraisal. Lind's (2001) Fairness Heuristic Theory suggests that employees face fundamental uncertainty about whether authority figures can be trusted, and they use available fairness signals as mental shortcuts. When explanations are timely, accurate, and genuinely take employee concerns into account, employees develop confident and positive cognitive orientations. When explanations are absent or misleading, the default shortcut is distrust the cognitive pattern underlying corrosive energy. Employees operating under persistent distrust remain defensively on guard, spending mental resources monitoring threats rather than pursuing productive goals. Shaw et al.'s (2003) finding that adequate explanation eliminates 43% of negative reactions to unfavourable decisions illustrates the extraordinary practical power of informational justice: it can transform the collective emotional response to necessary but difficult decisions, without altering the decisions themselves.

Social Exchange Theory: The Relational Bridge Between Justice and Energy: -

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by Blau (1964) and elaborated by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), holds that employment relationships are governed by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960): fair treatment creates an obligation to reciprocate in kind. For organizational energy, SET provides the mechanism through which individual interactions aggregate into collective states. Each justice-relevant interaction between a leader and an employee is an exchange event: fair outcomes, transparent processes, respectful treatment, and honest information generate reciprocal high-intensity positive engagement the substance of productive energy. When a leader falls short on any of these dimensions, employees respond with the energetic pattern that matches the deficit: effort withdrawal for distributional failures, commitment withdrawal for procedural failures, emotional withdrawal for interpersonal failures, and cognitive distrust for informational failures.

These individual exchange cycles accumulate into organizational energy states through emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002), shared sense-making (Lind, 2001), and social network effects (Baker, 2019). Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996) confirmed that employees maintain two parallel exchange relationships one with the organization as a whole (shaped primarily by procedural and distributive justice, expressed as perceived organizational support) and one with their immediate supervisor (shaped by interactional justice, expressed as the quality of the leader-member relationship). Deficits at either level create energy consequences that cannot be fully compensated for by improvements at the other level.

How Leadership Styles Raise or Lower Intensity and Quality: -

Leadership style is the primary proximate driver of organizational energy because it is the primary driver of all four justice dimensions. Table 3 provides a systematic analysis of six major leadership styles and their distinct effects on energy through justice mechanisms.

Table 3: Leadership Styles and Their Differential Effects on Energy Intensity and Quality via Justice Mechanisms

Leadership Style	Energy Effect	Justice Mechanism	Risk / Limitation
Transformational	Both ↑	Vision builds intensity through procedural justice of meaning; individualized consideration sustains quality through interpersonal justice	Inspiration without procedural fairness may create emotional activation without sustained behavioural intensity (acceleration trap)
Transactional	Intensity ↑;	Distributive and procedural	Engagement is instrumental rather

Leadership Style	Energy Effect	Justice Mechanism	Risk / Limitation
(Contingent Reward)	Quality neutral/↑	justice through clear performance-reward linkages	than affective; quality is fragile without interpersonal justice
Abusive/Toxic	Intensity ↑ short-term; Quality ↓↓	Fear creates short-term activation; destroys interpersonal justice; triggers moral outrage	Path: productive → corrosive → resigned inertia; quality damage persists after leader removal
Laissez-Faire / Passive	Both ↓	Procedural and informational deficits accumulate; employees lack voice and transparency	Comfortable energy collapses to resigned inertia; trust erodes through neglect
Authentic (Avolio& Gardner, 2005)	Intensity ↑; Quality ↑↑	Radical transparency embodies informational justice; consistency between values and actions embodies interpersonal justice	May lack urgency-generation; complementary transactional elements needed for sustained intensity
Servant (Greenleaf, 1977)	Quality ↑↑; Intensity contextual	Strong interpersonal justice; follower-first orientation builds in procedural fairness	Without urgency signals, drifts toward comfortable energy; challenge-oriented practices needed

Transformational Leadership: Raising Both Dimensions:-

Bass (1985) defined transformational leadership through four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Meta-analytic evidence confirms it as the strongest leadership predictor of organizational commitment and performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). From a justice standpoint, the articulation of a compelling vision generates what might be called procedural justice of meaning employees perceive their efforts as part of a worthwhile collective enterprise, sustaining intensity through purpose rather than incentive. Individualized consideration directly embodies interpersonal justice, maintaining the positive affect that underpins quality. The key risk is what Bruch and Vogel (2011) called the acceleration trap: when transformational leaders generate enthusiasm without also ensuring equitable workloads, recognition, and procedural fairness, they create distributional injustice that can shift organizations from productive to corrosive energy.

Transactional Leadership: Sustaining Intensity:-

The contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership sustains intensity through distributive justice. Clear performance-reward linkages create the conditions for expectancy (Vroom, 1964) and equity (Adams, 1965) that keep behavioural intensity high. Colquitt et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis supports this finding: the procedural regularity of performance management systems contributes procedural justice, building the organizational trust that makes sustained intensity rational. The quality limitation is built into the transactional justice profile: it excels at distributive and procedural justice while providing weaker interpersonal and informational signals. Without supplementary interactional justice, the contingent reward approach sustains behavioural intensity while leaving emotional quality fragile.

Abusive and Toxic Leadership: Destroying Quality:-

Abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviour represents chronic interpersonal justice violation, producing what Bies (1987) described as moral outrage. Tepper's research established associations with reduced job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and heightened anxiety a

comprehensive profile of quality destruction. The energy dynamics are particularly dangerous because fear activation creates a short-term intensity effect while simultaneously poisoning quality, producing corrosive energy. Maslach and Leiter (2016) documented the typical progression: sustained abusive supervision produces emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and eventual disengagement the path from productive through corrosive to resigned inertia. Critically, quality damage persists even after the leader is removed, as Kelly and Barsade (2001) showed that negative emotional contagion creates lasting emotional patterns requiring sustained interpersonal and informational justice to overcome.

Authentic and Servant Leadership: Champions of Quality:-

Authentic leadership (Avolio& Gardner, 2005), characterized by relational transparency and consistency between stated values and actual behaviour, directly embodies informational justice through honest, open communication. This creates the sense of cognitive safety that Lind's (2001) Fairness Heuristic Theory identifies as the precondition for positive energy quality. Walumbwa et al. (2008) confirmed that authentic leadership predicts organizational citizenship behaviour and follower commitment through positive psychological resources the building blocks of high-quality energy. Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) shares this quality emphasis through strong interpersonal justice and a follower-first orientation, but without deliberate urgency signals, it can drift toward comfortable energy; leaders need to supplement it with challenge-oriented practices in order to maintain intensity alongside quality.

Critical Interaction Effects: When Leadership Interventions Backfire: -

The Fear-Urgency Trap: Raising Intensity While Destroying Quality:-

The most common and destructive error in the energy matrix is using fear to generate urgency. Fear raises behavioural activation while simultaneously destroying emotional quality the defining profile of corrosive energy. Skarlicki and Folger (1997) demonstrated a critical interaction: when distributive outcomes are already unfavourable, low interactional justice triggers the strongest retaliatory behaviours. This means leaders who combine high performance demands with low interpersonal dignity create the highest-risk environments for active retaliation. Employees do not merely withdraw; they actively undermine and spread corrosive affect.

Proposition P1: The combination of high distributive and procedural justice demands with low interpersonal justice will produce corrosive energy not productive energy even when behavioural activation appears high to external observers. Quality degradation will outpace intensity gain, producing negative net performance over time.

The Warmth-Without-Stakes Trap: Quality Without Intensity:-

Leaders who excel at relational and informational justice genuinely respectful, transparent, and personally attentive often create cultures of high emotional quality but low behavioural urgency. The justice mechanism here is a distributional expectation mismatch: employees receive good interpersonal treatment but face no clear expectation that strong effort produces meaningfully different outcomes for them. Without performance differentiation, the motivational circuit of expectancy fails to activate, and intensity stays at a comfortable rather than productive level. Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) confirmed that organizations in comfortable energy are paradoxically at high strategic risk: they feel stable and positive but lack the urgency that drives adaptation and innovation.

Proposition P2: High interpersonal and informational justice without sufficient distributive and procedural challenge will produce comfortable energy rather than productive energy. Quality will be high but intensity insufficient for meaningful performance improvement or strategic adaptation.

The Acceleration Trap: Intensity Collapse Through Distributional Injustice:-

Bruch and Vogel's (2011) acceleration trap relentlessly high demands without recovery, leading to burnout is, from a justice standpoint, a form of distributional injustice: employees provide inputs (effort, time, mental resource) that exceed what they receive back (recognition, compensation, rest). Adams's (1965) equity theory predicts the response: employees restore equity by reducing inputs (reducing intensity) or leaving entirely. Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) established the pathway: perceived injustice produces emotional exhaustion, which reduces performance and commitment. The acceleration trap is therefore not primarily a resource management problem it is fundamentally a distributive justice problem.

Proposition P3: Organizations in the acceleration trap will show simultaneously high behavioural intensity and declining quality, as distributional injustice depletes emotional resources, producing a trajectory from productive energy through corrosive energy to resigned inertia.

The Procedural Void: Intensity Decay Without Process Transparency:-

A fourth critical interaction occurs when leaders try to sustain intensity through distributional incentives alone, without adequate procedural or informational justice. When processes are opaque and employees have no voice in decisions, even fair outcomes are experienced as unjust. Lind and Tyler's (1988) group engagement model explains why: without procedural justice, employees cannot trust that positive outcomes will continue, because they can see no reliable system governing future distributions. This uncertainty erodes the commitment that sustains long-term behavioural intensity.

Proposition P4: Distributive justice without procedural justice will produce short-term intensity but long-term intensity decay, as the absence of process transparency creates systemic distrust that erodes organizational commitment and the sustained behavioural investment it supports.

An Integrated Model and Testable Propositions: -

The Integrated Model:-

The evidence reviewed in this paper converges on an integrated model with two distinct pathways:

Intensity Pathway: Leadership → Distributive Justice + Procedural Justice → Perceived Organizational Support (POS) + Organizational Trust → Energy Intensity (behavioural and cognitive activation)

Quality Pathway: Leadership → Interpersonal Justice + Informational Justice → Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality + Psychological Safety → Energy Quality (positive vs. negative emotional valence)

Social Exchange Theory provides the relational mechanism: each justice-relevant interaction is an exchange event generating reciprocal responses positive reciprocity when justice is fulfilled, negative reciprocity when it is violated. These individual exchanges accumulate into collective energy states through emotional contagion, shared sense-making, and social network diffusion. Productive organizational energy achieving high intensity and positive quality simultaneously requires all four justice dimensions to be adequately met. No single dimension is sufficient, and no three dimensions can compensate for a serious failure in the fourth.

Additional Testable Propositions:-

P5: Leaders who score high on distributive and procedural justice but low on interpersonal and informational justice will produce teams with high behavioural intensity but low emotional quality, resulting in corrosive rather than productive organizational energy, particularly under high-stress conditions.

P6: Leaders who score high on interpersonal and informational justice but low on distributive and procedural justice will produce teams with high emotional quality but low behavioural intensity, resulting in comfortable rather than productive organizational energy, particularly in stable, low-challenge environments.

P7: Organizational justice climate the aggregation of individual fairness perceptions at the unit level will mediate the relationship between leadership style and organizational energy state, accounting for meaningful variance beyond what individual-level perceptions explain.

P8: The path from corrosive to productive energy through leadership intervention will require a sequenced approach to fairness repair: restoring interpersonal justice (reducing negative emotion) must come before restoring procedural justice (rebuilding trust), which must come before recalibrating distributional fairness (restoring motivational investment), with each stage producing distinct measurable improvements in the corresponding energy dimension.

Practical Leadership Prescriptions: -

Table 4: Practical Leadership Prescriptions by Energy Goal and Justice Mechanism

Leadership Goal	Justice Mechanism	Specific Leadership Action	Practical Tools
Build Intensity Without Destroying Quality	Procedural + Distributive Justice	Communicate external challenges clearly; apply performance standards consistently; create voice mechanisms linked to	Urgency through shared purpose, not fear; reward equity reviews; 360-degree procedural reviews

Leadership Goal		Justice Mechanism	Specific Leadership Action	Practical Tools
			contribution	
Improve Without Intensity	Quality Losing	Interpersonal Informational Justice +	Model respectful conduct; explain difficult decisions honestly and in a timely manner; maintain dignity under pressure	Communication protocols for adverse decisions; leader coaching on interpersonal conduct; transparency audits
Escape Energy	Corrosive	All four justice dimensions	Acknowledge injustices openly; create reparative procedural events; rebuild psychological safety through consistent respect	Justice climate assessment; leader behaviour feedback; structural equity reviews to address distributional grievances
Prevent Comfortable Drift	Energy	Procedural Distributive stakes +	Introduce meaningful performance differentiation; make consequences visible; connect aspirational challenges to shared purpose	Stretch goals tied to fair reward; procedural accountability systems; transparent performance feedback
Sustain Productive Energy Over Time		All four justice dimensions + recovery	Monitor all four justice dimensions continuously; build recovery periods into work systems; develop energy-aware leadership at all levels	Cole et al. (2012) Productive Energy Measure (PEM); justice climate surveys; leadership development focused on justice behaviours

Diagnosing the Energy-Justice State:-

Before prescribing interventions, leaders must accurately diagnose their organization's current energy state and the justice deficits that are sustaining it. Cole et al.'s (2012) Productive Energy Measure (PEM) is a validated 14-item instrument that assesses emotional, cognitive, and behavioural energy at the unit level. Colquitt's (2001) organizational justice scale provides validated measurement of all four justice dimensions. Used together, these instruments allow leaders to identify precisely which energy dimension is deficient and which justice deficit is causing it enabling targeted, evidence-based intervention rather than undifferentiated engagement initiatives.

The Sequencing Principle:-

Organizations in corrosive energy states cannot be moved to productive energy simply by improving distributive or procedural justice. Interpersonal justice repair must come first: leaders must demonstrate, through consistently respectful behaviour, that the emotional environment has genuinely changed, before employees can experience procedural or distributional improvements as credible rather than cynical. This mirrors the organizational change literature's insight (Lewin, 1947; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) that a state must be unfrozen before it can be changed: the affective freeze of corrosive energy must be thawed by interpersonal justice before cognitive and behavioural dimensions can be realigned.

The Dual Mandate of Leadership Development:-

This framework implies a dual mandate for how leaders should be developed: not just as visionaries or relationship builders, but as justice architects people who understand how their everyday decisions and behaviours affect all four justice dimensions and the energy states those dimensions' produce. Skarlicki and Latham's (1997) experimental research showed that leaders trained specifically in organizational justice behaviours produced significant increases in followers' citizenship behaviour a direct indicator of energy intensity.

Research Agenda and Limitations: -**Research Gaps and Future Directions:-**

Despite the strength of this theoretical framework, several important research gaps remain. First, no published study has simultaneously measured all four justice dimensions, both energy dimensions, and the mediating psychological mechanisms in a single longitudinal design. Such a study using the Cole et al. (2012) PEM alongside Colquitt's (2001) justice scale and measures of perceived organizational support, leader-member exchange quality, psychological safety, and emotional exhaustion would provide the comprehensive empirical test that this framework calls for.

Second, the dynamics of how organizations transition between energy states are still poorly understood. Experience sampling methods combined with network-analytic approaches to emotional contagion would allow researchers to trace how individual justice events spread through social networks to produce collective energy state shifts. Third, moderating roles of organizational culture, industry context, and national culture (Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999) require systematic investigation. Fourth, Bass's (1985) augmentation hypothesis that transformational leadership adds value beyond transactional can be theoretically reinterpreted as the hypothesis that interpersonal and informational justice add value beyond the distributive and procedural justice provided by transactional leadership, representing a substantial and productive empirical program.

Limitations:-

This framework is primarily theoretical and integrative in nature. While it draws on extensive empirical evidence across the justice, leadership, and organizational energy literatures, direct empirical testing of the proposed pathways has not yet been conducted. Additionally, the framework assumes that justice perceptions form in accurate correspondence to leadership behaviours, whereas attribution processes (Greenberg, 1993) and emotional states (Barsky & Kaplan, 2007) can bias such perceptions in different directions for different individuals. The framework also does not fully account for follower characteristics such as personality, sensitivity to justice, or sensitivity to equity as potential moderators of the justice-energy relationship.

Conclusions: -

This paper has developed a comprehensive theoretical account of organizational energy intensity and quality as two distinct variables, driven by different justice dimensions through different psychological mechanisms, and enacted through leadership behaviour as the proximate cause of organizational energy states. Five core contributions stand out. First, the independence of intensity and quality is structural it reflects the fundamental difference between equity-motivational and trust-based mechanisms (which govern intensity) and affective-appraisal and cognitive-heuristic mechanisms (which govern quality). Any leadership intervention that does not maintain this distinction cannot reliably manage both dimensions at the same time. Second, organizational justice theory provides the most empirically grounded explanation of how leadership behaviours produce energy states. Distributive and procedural justice determine intensity through motivational and commitment pathways; interpersonal and informational justice determine quality through affective and cognitive appraisal pathways.

Third, Social Exchange Theory establishes the relational mechanism through which individual justice interactions accumulate into collective energy states. Leaders are the primary actors initiating this exchange cycle, and the quality of justice in their actions determines the reciprocating energy response of their employees. Fourth, the most dangerous leadership errors raise one energy dimension while destroying the other. Fear-based urgency raises intensity while destroying quality; warmth without accountability sustains quality while letting intensity decay. Understanding the independence of these dimensions is the necessary starting point for avoiding these systematic traps. Fifth and most fundamentally productive organizational energy is a justice achievement before it is a performance achievement. Leaders who provide comprehensive fairness across all four dimensions create conditions in which productive energy is not merely possible but natural. The challenge for contemporary organizational leadership is, at its core, a fairness challenge: organizations seeking to sustain productive energy must develop leaders who are, above all else, justice architects people who understand that every decision, process, interaction, and explanation they make is an act with measurable consequences for the collective energy on which organizational performance ultimately depends.

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