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Perceptions of Violence Prevention Climate and Strain: A Mediated Model

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The current study investigated the interrelationships across perceptions of violence prevention climate and several workplace strain variables (i.e., job satisfaction, turnover intentions, physical symptoms of strain, and burnout). By adopting a social exchange framework, trust was identified as a potential mediator of the relationships between the focal variables. One hundred and eight employees participated in the cross-sectional design by completing a self-report survey. Correlational analyses revealed support for significant associations between perceptions of violence prevention climate and the workplace strain variables. Moreover, mediational analyses revealed that trust fully mediated the relationships between perceptions of violence prevention climate and job satisfaction, turnover intentions, physical symptoms of strain, and burnout. Based on the results of the current investigation, perceptions of violence prevention climate are associated with employee well-being and organizational attitudes. Additionally, trust may be one potential mechanism that underlies the focal relationships. The results from the current investigation can inform future organizational behavior. Supervisors should be concerned and aware of the perceived violence prevention climate and associated levels of trust among incumbent employees.

Incidents of workplace violence have been associated with a host of variables critical to the healthy functioning of both organizations and employees (e.g., Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Schat & Kelloway, 2000; Sims & Sun, 2012; Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, & Spector, 2014). The full impact of such incidents have yet to be adequately explored but there is ample evidence that the role of

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violence in the workplace is more complicated than simple interactions between victims and perpetrators. More specifically, Violence Prevention Climate (VPC) is conceptualized as a sub-domain of safety climate perceptions and includes employee perceptions of policies, practices, and procedures related to the control and elimination of workplace violence and verbal aggression (Spector, Coulter, Stockwell, & Matz, 2007). Associations between employee perceptions of VPC and workplace outcomes have been documented across investigations. High perceived levels of VPC are positively related to physical well-being, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction (Aytac & Dursen, 2012; Chang, Eatough, Spector, & Kessler, 2012; Kessler, Spector, Chang, & Parr, 2008; Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Spector et al., 2007; Yang & Caughlin, 2017). Furthermore, reports of high perceived levels of VPC are negatively related to turnover intentions (Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Yang & Caughlin, 2017). Although these associations may be partially due to direct incidents of workplace victimization, the majority of investigations into VPC have found unique explanatory effects while controlling for reports of workplace victimization (Chang et al., 2012; Kessler et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2007). Thus, perceptions of VPC are unique stressors in the workplace and reports of workplace victimization do not fully account for the observed patterns of association.

Although findings from previous investigations on VPC have yielded significant association with important workplace variables (e.g., Aytac & Dursen, 2012; Chang et al., 2012; Kessler, Spector, Chang, & Parr, 2008; Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Spector et al., 2007; Yang & Caughlin, 2017), the next step in understanding the role of VPC in the workplace is to begin identifying potential paths and processes that may underlie such associations. Several studies have addressed the issue at a theoretical level, but there are relatively few empirical investigations into the underlying mechanisms that may influence the observed associations with perceptions of VPC and workplace strain variables. Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, and Spector (2014) investigated the role of several potential moderators between workplace mistreatment climate and several workplace outcomes. These moderators were largely conceptualized as methodological or measurement features of previous investigations (i.e., mistreatment type & scale type). Mueller and Tschan (2011) found support for the mediational role of fear of future violence in regard to perceptions of VPC and employee well-being. Additionally, Chang and colleagues (2012) reported that affective strains and prevention motivation mediated the relationships between VPC and future violence prevention and policy compliance. Thus, there is evidence that constructs related to motivational and emotional processing are important when attempting to understand the nature of the

relationships between perceptions of VPC and employee outcomes. Although investigations focused on exploring underlying motivational and emotional processes have helped to develop the VPC literature, there are other potential underlying processes that have yet to be investigated. For instance, perceptions of VPC may influence the relationship that is developed between employees and the organization. Adopting a relational lens and assessing constructs associated with the development of the relationship between employees and the organization may yield results that contribute uniquely to the VPC literature.

Social Exchange Theory

At a theoretical level, multiple frameworks have been adopted to generate expectations in regard to the nature of the association between perceptions of VPC and subsequent employee strain. For example, both the reactionary transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the more cognitively focused expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) have been used to develop expectations regarding the observed associations between perceptions of VPC and workplace outcomes (Chang et al., 2012; Yang & Caughlin, 2017). Although support has been found for expectations generated from these theoretical frameworks, there are some theoretical lenses that have yet to be explored that may be potentially relevant. For instance, social exchange theory (SET) is a relational theory that identifies social exchanges as an essential component to the development of relationships (Blau, 1964). Through interactions among members of a relationship, information is disseminated that can be interpreted by other members. A social exchange is considered “the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring to others” (Blau, 1964, p. 91). A large frequency of successful social exchanges among two parties is expected to yield a relationship that is high in both trust and commitment. Within workplace settings, social exchange relationships can develop between the employees, the organization, and supervisors.

Previous literature has identified perceptions of organizational support as an indicator of the strength of the social exchange relationships between an employee and the organization (see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Perceptions of organizational support (POS) can be defined as global appraisals concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Although perceived obligations generated from social exchanges are often left unspecified, employees are expected to adjust their POS based on their perception of how well the organization has fulfilled these perceived obligations. Moreover, there is some evidence that maintaining high

POS among employees is associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and withdrawal behaviors (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, organizations that invest resources toward fulfilling their part of social exchange relationships will likely benefit from employee reciprocity.

Although social exchange relationships can manifest in a variety of different forms, some types of social exchange are especially relevant to the workplace setting. For instance, psychological contracts are an “individual’s beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding the terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9). Thus, psychological contracts include expectations that may or may not be part of an official employment contract. For instance, employees may expect rapid advancement or job security when such provisions are never objectively stated. These expectations are considered general expectations that employees may have across organizations.

A safe working environment may be another general expectation that employees expect across a variety of organizational settings. When developing social exchange relationships with organizations, the majority of employees likely expect that a safe working environment will be provided or even legally required. Thus, unless the job is notoriously dangerous, or the hazardous nature of a job is outlined beforehand, employees may perceive unsafe workplaces as a failure on behalf of the organization to fulfill their end of the psychological contract. This type of violation is considered a psychological contract breach and can erode the strength of the social exchange relationship between employees and the organization. Furthermore, perceived psychological contract breaches have been related to a host of negative workplace outcomes that span both workplace attitudes and behaviors (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). Therefore, employees may interpret low VPC as an indicator of a low level of organizational support and, for some, a psychological contract breach. This may be one potential explanation for the unique effects of perceptions of VPC that was found across studies when controlling for incidents of victimization (i.e., Chang et al., 2012; Kessler et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2007).

Trust as a Mediator

Trust is a core concept of SET and is important to the development of strong relationships between employees and the organization (Blau, 1964; Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013; Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007). Trust is a psychological state in which the trustor maintains the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the actions of the trustee (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, &

Camerer, 1998). The state of trust requires an employee to be vulnerable in regard to the exchange of outcomes in relation to another party. By accepting vulnerability, the trustor gives the trustee an opportunity to discharge their obligations in relation to the services rendered (Blau, 1964). If the trustee reciprocates the exchange to the satisfaction of the vulnerable trustee, the social exchange relationship is reinforced and the trustor will likely be motivated to invest more into the relationship. Thus, trust is a critical variable in the formation of intimacy in relationships. The need for trust in the development of social exchange relationships is especially relevant in organizational settings when tasks are often interdependent. Furthermore, trust is associated with several important workplace outcomes, including task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, counterproductive work behaviors, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2007). Trust has also been associated with employee well-being (i.e., Harvey, Kelloway, & Duncan-Leiper, 2003; Sapp, Kawachi, Sorensen, LaMontagne, & Subramanian, 2010).

Although the majority of previous studies on trust in the workplace have reported main effects among organizational variables, there is evidence that trust can play a mediational role among variables. More specifically, Aryee, Budhwar, and Chen (2002) found support for the full mediational role of trust among interactional justice and workplace attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment). The authors generated their expectation regarding the mediational path of trust by drawing on SET. Trust was conceptualized as a manifestation of social exchange which underpins the expression of mutual loyalty, goodwill, and support (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002). Thus, the associations between perceptions of interactional justice and subsequent outcomes may have been due to the impact of interactional justice on the social exchange relationship between the employee and the organization as manifested by reports of trust. A similar mechanism is expected to underlie the relationship between perception of VPC and workplace strain variables. More specifically, trust may account for the relationships between perceptions of VPC and workplace strain variables as it is an indicator of the strength of the social exchange relationship between the employee and employer. Therefore, the current investigation attempts to explore the role of trust as a potential mediator between the perception of VPC and workplace strain variables.

Workplace Strain Variables

Perceptions of VPC have been conceptualized as a stressor that is associated with employee well-being (i.e., Chang et al., 2012; Kessler et

al., 2008; Spector et al., 2007). When employees perceive a stressor, they often initiate cognitive and affective processing. A series of attributions, appraisals, emotions, and coping mechanisms are triggered to ameliorate or remove the impact of the stressor (see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). These processes are reactionary in nature and depend largely on employee perceptions. They are expected to energize cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions to the perceptions of stressors. For instance, employees can engage in emotion focused coping by changing their opinions or withdrawing from the aversive stressor. Employees can also engage in problem focused coping, such as participating in self-advocacy. Furthermore, chronic exposure to stressors can deplete the energy needed for healthy coping and symptoms of psychological and physiological well-being may begin to manifest. Thus, to thoroughly investigate the impact of a stressor on an individual, measures across several domains of strain should be included. The current study assesses strain across the domains of physical well-being, psychological well-being, organizational attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is associated with job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001) and has been conceptualized as a precursor for turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993) and an indicator for employee well-being (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2003). Perceptions of VPC and trust have both been positively associated with reports of job satisfaction (Aytac & Dursen, 2012; Yang & Caughlin, 2017). Employees that perceive their organization as invested in their safety are expected to be more likely to trust the organization and to be satisfied with their jobs. Furthermore, trust is expected to be associated with job satisfaction as employees that report high levels of trust likely perceive strong social exchange relationships and are thus more likely to be satisfied with their position.

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of VPC will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Trust will mediate the relationship between perceptions of VPC and job satisfaction.

Turnover intentions. Turnover intentions have been associated with evaluations of job performance (Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009) and turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Turnover intentions are positively associated with a variety of workplace stressors (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007) including perceptions of VPC (Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Yang & Caughlin, 2017). Additionally, turnover intentions are negatively associated with employee trust (Rousseau et al., 1998; Aryeet al., 2002).

Employees that perceive their organization as invested in their safety are expected to report high levels of trust and to think less about leaving the organization. Furthermore, trust is expected to be negatively associated with turnover intentions as employees are more likely to perceive a strong social exchange relationship with the organization.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of VPC will be negatively associated with turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 4: Trust will mediate the relationship between perceptions of VPC and turnover intentions.

Physical symptoms of strain. There is evidence that workplace stressors are associated with employee reports of physiological symptoms of strain reactions. Nixon et al., (2011) found that occupational stressors (i.e., interpersonal conflict, organizational constraints, and workload) were positively associated with several physical symptoms of strain (e.g., backache, headache, eye strain, sleep disturbances, dizziness, fatigue, appetite, and gastrointestinal problems). Although a variety of psychological strains may be associated with physiological symptoms, emotional strain is thought to be a proximal psychological antecedent (Spector, 1988). The relationship between stressors and physical symptoms are also partly due to complex processes associated with physiological systems (i.e., hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis and the sympathetic-adrenomedullary systems) associated with arousal (Nixon, Mazzola, Bauer, Krueger, & Spector, 2011). Physical symptoms of strain are negatively associated with perceptions of VPC (Kessler et al., 2008; Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Spector et al., 2007; Spector, Yang, & Zhou, 2015; Yang & Caughlin, 2017) and positively associated with trust (Colquitt, LePine, Zapata, & Wild, 2011). Employees that perceive their organization as invested in their safety are expected to be more likely to trust the organization and to report less physical symptoms of strain. Furthermore, trust is expected to be associated with physical symptoms of strain as perceptions of a strong social exchange relationship with the organization will result in less negative affective reactions that may tax the physiological arousal systems.

Hypothesis 5: Perceptions of VPC will be negatively related to physical symptoms of strain.

Hypothesis 6: Trust will mediate the relationship between perceptions of VPC and physical symptoms of strain.

Burnout. Burnout is a psychological strain that is a response to chronic stress (Maslach, 1982). Burnout is comprised of feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment

due to workplace stressors (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). Burnout is associated with job performance, turnover intentions, and job satisfaction (Babakus, Yavas, & Ashill, 2009; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Additionally, several job stressors have been associated with burnout including role ambiguity, role clarity, role conflict, and workload (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Although the direct link between VPC and burnout has not been tested, there is evidence that overall safety climate is associated with burnout (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2010). Burnout is also associated with exposure to incidents of violence (Fox & Stallworth, 2010). Thus, a negative association is expected between perceptions of VPC and burnout. Trust is also associated with burnout (Harvey et al., 2003). Employees that perceive their organization as invested in their safety are expected to be more likely to trust the organization and display less symptoms of burnout. Furthermore, trust is expected to be negatively associated with burnout as perceptions of psychological contract breaches are associated with reports of burnout (Cantisano, Dominguez, & Garcia, 2007).

Hypothesis 7: Perceptions of VPC will be negatively related to burnout.

Hypothesis 8: Trust will mediate the relationship between perceptions of VPC and burnout.

The goal of the current study was to take a relational approach to the generation of expectations. More specifically, SET was used as a framework to identify trust as a potential mediator between perceptions of VPC and workplace strain variables. Strain variables were chosen to represent multiple domains such as workplace attitude (i.e., job satisfaction), behavioral intentions (i.e., turnover intentions), physical strain (i.e., physical symptoms of strain), and psychological strain (i.e., burnout). A cross-sectional self-report survey was administered to faculty and staff currently employed by a regional university. This sample is unique to the VPC literature. The current investigation is expected to replicate the main effects from previous studies on VPC with a unique sample and to contribute significantly to the literature by testing the mediational paths.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of faculty and staff from a regional university located in the southeastern region of the United States. Of the 1,091 employees that were invited to participate, 158 employees started the survey. The response rate was in the expected range (i.e., 14.48 %) due to the nature of the research topic. Participants that indicated their current position was either a student or retired staff member were removed from

the database. Participants that indicated that they worked less than 20 hours per week were also removed from the database. Finally, participants that completed less than a third of survey or spent less than 5 minutes on the survey were not included in the current analyses. The sample size of the final database consisted of 108 employees. The majority of the participants completed the survey (74%) and the completion rates remained stable across male (76%) and female (73%) participants. The mean age of the participants was 41 ($SD = 14.88$) and ranged from 20 to 69 years of age. The majority of the sample (64.81%) was female and Non-Hispanic (94%). Participants most frequently identified themselves as White (60%), Black (14.70%), and Asian (5.50%). The average tenure of participants at the university was 8.36 years ($SD = 8.50$) and the range was between nine months and 33 years. Participants reported spending between 8 and 84 hours per week on campus ($M = 35.26$, $SD = 11.48$).

Procedure

The survey was distributed through Qualtrics, an online survey management tool. Survey participants were solicited from a master employee list containing the contact information of 2,588 employees provided by the university. Members of the research team invited employees to participate by e-mailing every third employee on the master list. Recruitment efforts were terminated once 150 responses had been logged. The recruitment message was disseminated to the participants' work e-mail accounts and included a link to the online survey and the IRB approved overview of the study. Additionally, the recruitment e-mail indicated that the survey was being conducted by a team of researchers in the psychology department, that participation was voluntary, and that the confidentiality of individual results would be maintained. Participants were also informed that no unique identifiers were collected and that there was a low probability that the anonymity of their data would be threatened. Seven days later, all employees originally contacted were sent an additional follow-up e-mail reminder. Participants were encouraged to communicate any questions or concerns that they may have had. A list of individuals who contacted the researchers to opt out of the study was maintained, and no further contact was made with those on the list. The current investigation was supported by the regional university's office of sponsored programs and research administration.

Measures

Violence prevention climate. Perceptions of VPC have been assessed with several different scales. Spector and colleagues (2007) implemented

a three point (i.e., no, don't know, yes) violence climate scale. The authors indicated this imprecise scale as a limitation to their investigation and called for more scale development. Additionally, Mueller and Tschan (2011) implemented a four item measure that had noticeable contamination, with some items assessing violence climate while others assessed general safety related procedures. Considering the inclusion of different outcome scales across studies, implementing different quality scales across investigations makes the comparison of results difficult. Yang and colleagues (2014) identified differences in effect sizes between mistreatment climate and strain variables. Thus, the differences among violence prevention scales may be influencing the observed effect sizes across outcomes. The current investigation adopted a scale that has been identified as being free from contamination (i.e., Kessler et al., 2008).

The 18-item *Violence Prevention Climate Survey* (Kessler et al., 2008) was adopted to measure employee perceptions of efforts to prevent violence on campus; participants were asked to rate the items (e.g., "My employer provides adequate assault/violence prevention training.") on a 6-point scale ranging from (1) *disagree very much* to (6) *agree very much*. The internal consistency was .94. Observed relationships between the violence prevention climate survey and other constructs (i.e., psychological strain, physical strain, physical violence) have matched the pattern of associations that can be theoretically expected. Furthermore, the pattern of associations among the sub-facets of the *Violence Prevention Climate Scale* and reports of employee workload provides evidence that the violence prevention scale can differentiate among constructs. More specifically, two sub-facets of the Violence Prevention Climate Scale (i.e., perceptions of policies and procedures & perceptions of practices and responses) were not significantly associated with workload while the third sub-facet (i.e., perceptions of pressure to be unsafe) was negatively associated with workload (Kessler et al., 2008). A high mean score reflects a strong VPC.

Trust. Robinson & Rousseau's (1994) *Organizational Trust* scale was used to assess employee trust in relation to the organization. Participants were asked to rate 7 items (e.g., "I believe my employer has high integrity.") on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly Agree*. The internal consistency was .94. Relationships that have been observed between the *Organizational Trust* scale and a variety of relevant organizational constructs (i.e., organizational justice, trust in supervisor, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, & job satisfaction) match the pattern of expectations that can be generated from constructs close to trust in the nomological net. Additionally, there is evidence of discrimination between the *Organizational Trust* scale and constructs that are more distal in the nomological net (i.e., task

performance). A high mean score reflects a high level of organizational trust.

Job satisfaction and turnover intention. The *Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions Scale* (Cammann, 1983; Cammann, Fischman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) was also included to assess employee job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Participants were asked to rate each item (e.g., “all in all, I am satisfied with my job.”) on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. Three items assessed job satisfaction and three items assessed turnover intentions. The mean scale score was then calculated for job satisfaction and turnover intentions. A high mean score reflects either a highly satisfied employee or an employee that is energized to leave the organization, respectively. The internal consistency was .81 for job satisfaction and .73 for turnover intentions. There is meta-analytic evidence of the validity of the job satisfaction scale (Bowling & Hammond, 2008). In regard to the turnover intentions portion of the scale, the observed pattern of relationships matches the expected pattern relationships (Bouckennooghe, Raja, & Butt, 2013). The turnover intentions scale is associated with constructs that are close in the nomological net (i.e., affect & job satisfaction) and not significantly associated with constructs that are more distally located (i.e., job performance).

Physical symptoms. The 13-item *Physical Symptoms Inventory* (Spector & Jex, 1998) was also included to assess physiological manifestations of strain. Participants rated the frequency at which they experienced several physical health symptoms, such as backache, headache, and eye strain, over a one-month period on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *not at all* to (5) *every day*. The mean scale score was then calculated for physiological symptoms of strain. A high mean score reflects an employee that is experiencing a large amount of physiological strains. The internal consistency was .86. Spector and Jex (1998) reported that the observed pattern of relationships between the physical symptom inventory and a variety of constructs (i.e., anxiety, depression, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, & job performance) were generally congruent with expectations derived from the literature.

Burnout. The 22-item *Burnout Inventory* (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was also included to assess employee burnout; participants rated each item (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained by my work.”) on a 7-point scale ranging from (0) *never* to (6) *everyday*. The mean scale score was then calculated for employee burnout. A high mean score indicates that an employee is experiencing a high degree of symptoms associated with burnout. The internal consistency was .77. Evidence for convergent and discriminant validity has been found in previous validation efforts of the *Burnout Inventory* (see Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and measures of internal consistency are reported in Table 1. To investigate the interrelationships of the focal variables, correlational analyses were conducted (see Table 2). The workplace strains were all significantly associated in the expected di-

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics for Demographics and Focal Variables

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>
Age	108	41.15	14.88	
Tenure	108	8.36	8.50	-
Week Hours	92	34.88	11.99	-
Prevention Climate	108	4.29	.99	.94
Job Sat	98	4.07	.91	.81
Turnover Intentions	90	2.19	.96	.73
Physical Symptoms	90	1.71	.56	.86
Burnout	89	2.37	.86	.77
Trust	88	3.75	1.03	.94

rection. Job satisfaction was related to turnover intentions ($r(95) = -.79$, $p < .001$), physical symptoms of strain ($r(88) = -.41$, $p = .002$), and burnout ($r(87) = -.58$, $p < .001$). Turnover intentions were related to physical symptoms of strain ($r(87) = .41$, $p < .001$) and burnout ($r(87) = .52$, $p < .001$). Finally, physical symptoms of strain were related to burnout ($r(86) = .35$, $p = .002$).

TABLE 2 Correlations among Focal Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Prevention Climate	-					
2. Job Sat	.49**	-				
3. Turnover Intentions	-.33**	-.79**	-			
4. Physical Symptoms	-.26*	-.41**	.41**	-		
5. Burnout	-.48**	-.58**	.52**	.35**	-	
6. Trust	.67**	.69**	.57**	-.36**	-.52**	-

Note: $N = 108$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

First the bivariate hypotheses were tested (i.e., hypotheses 1, 3, 5, and 7). As expected, perceptions of VPC were significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r(95) = .49$, $p < .001$), turnover intentions ($r(94) = -.33$, $p = .001$), physical symptoms ($r(87) = -.26$, $p = .014$), and burnout ($r(86) = -.48$, $p < .001$). Thus, expectations regarding perceptions of VPC and

workplace strain variables (i.e., hypotheses, 1, 3, 5, 7) were supported. Additionally, trust was associated with perceptions of VPC ($r(85) = .67, p < .001$), job satisfaction ($r(86) = .69, p < .001$), turnover intentions ($r = -.57, p < .001$), physical symptoms of strain ($r(85) = -.36, p = .001$), and burnout ($r(86) = -.52, p < .001$).

In order to investigate the mediational hypotheses (i.e., hypotheses 2, 4, 6, 8), the method by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and the “PROCESS” macro script (Hayes, 2012) were used to conduct mediational analyses with SPSS 24 (IBM, Armonk, NY). This approach is appropriate when investigating small samples because the bootstrapping method avoids making assumptions about the population sampling distribution that might not hold in small samples. The bootstrapping was set to 5,000 with a 95% confidence level. The significance of the mediational effect at the .05 level is supported if the 95% CIs for the estimates exclude zero.

The analyses yielded evidence from the data to support Hypothesis 2. Trust was expected to mediate the relationship between VPC and job satisfaction. Approximately 49% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted for by the predictors ($R^2 = .49$). There was a significant indirect effect of VPC on job satisfaction through trust, $b = .41, SE =$

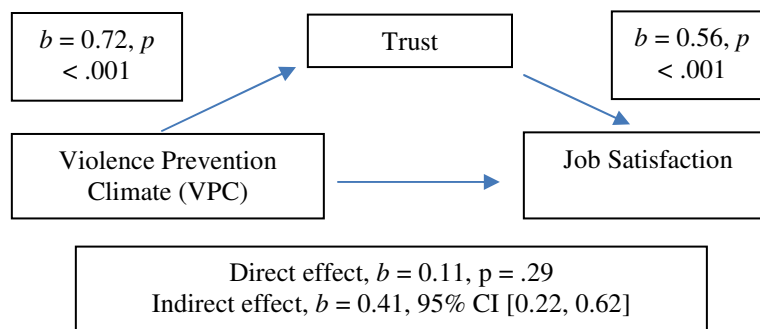


FIGURE 1. Trust as a Mediator between VPC & Job Satisfaction

0.10, 95% BCa CI [0.22, 0.62], and no significant direct effect of VPC on job satisfaction, $b = 0.11, SE = 0.10, 95\% \text{ BCa CI } [-0.09, 0.32]$, consistent with trust as the mediator for the full effect of VPC on job satisfaction. Results are displayed in Figure 1.

Empirical evidence was also found for Hypothesis 4. Trust was expected to mediate the path between perceptions of VPC and turnover intentions. Approximately 32% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted for by the predictors ($R^2 = .32$). Consistent with this

hypothesis, there was a significant indirect effect of VPC on turnover intentions through trust, $b = -0.37$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% BCa CI [-0.60, -0.16], and no significant direct effect of VPC on turnover intentions, $b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.13$, BCa CI [-0.20, 0.30]. Results are displayed in Figure 2.

The data also supported Hypothesis 6. Trust was expected to mediate the relationship between perceptions of VPC and physical symptoms of strain. Approximately 12% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted

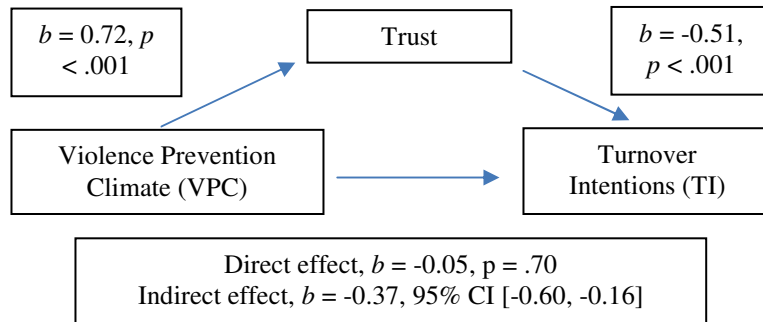


FIGURE 2. Trust as a Mediator between VPC & TI.

for by the predictors ($R^2 = .12$). Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a significant indirect effect of VPC on physical symptoms of strain through trust, $b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% BCa CI [-0.28, -0.01], and no significant direct effect of VPC on physical symptoms of strain, $b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.80$, 95% BCa CI [-0.16, 0.16]. The findings are consistent with a pattern of full mediation of the effect of VPC on physical symptoms through trust. The results are displayed in Figure 3.

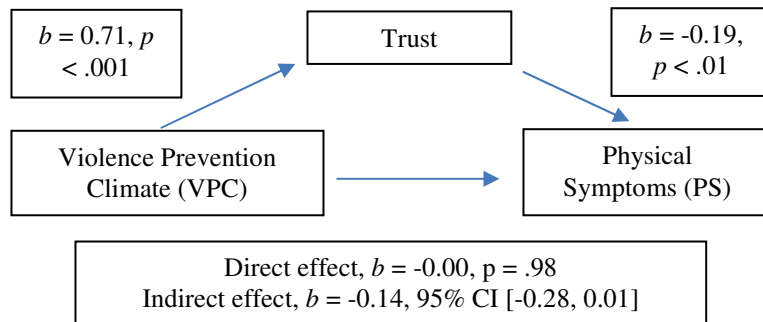


FIGURE 3. Trust as a Mediator between VPC & PS.

Finally, support was found for Hypothesis 8. Trust was expected to mediate the path between perceptions of VPC and employee burnout. Approximately 29% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted for by the predictors ($R^2 = .29$). Consistent with this hypothesis, there was a significant indirect effect of VPC on burnout through trust, $b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% BCa CI [-0.38, -0.06], and no significant direct effect of VPC on burnout, $b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% BCa CI [-0.42, 0.01]. The results are displayed in Figure 4.

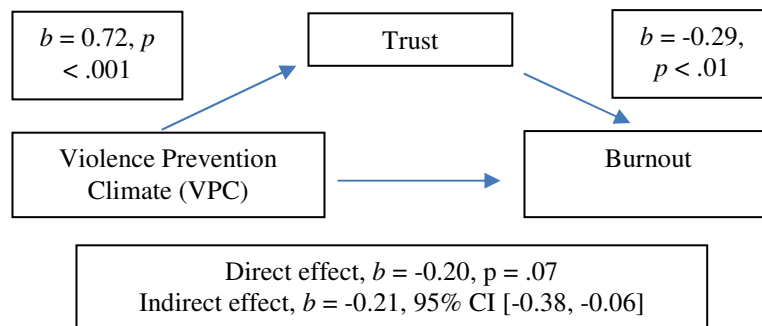


FIGURE 4. Trust as a Mediator between VPC & Burnout.

DISCUSSION

The goal of the current investigation was to explore the nature of the relationships between perceptions of VPC and several workplace strain variables. Perceptions of VPC were expected to be associated with employee reports of workplace strain. Furthermore, trust was predicted to play a mediational role among these main effects. A survey assessing both perceptions of VPC and several strain variables was administered to an employed sample. Overall, the data were congruent with the expectations generated from SET and previous literature on VPC (Aytac & Dursen, 2012; Chang et al., 2012; Kessler et al., 2008; Mueller & Tschann, 2011; Spector et al., 2007; Yang & Caughlin, 2017).

Perceptions of VPC were associated with reports of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, physical symptoms, and burnout. Not only are these results congruent with previous investigations that sampled nursing or student populations, but they contribute uniquely to the literature as the data presented here was sampled from staff and faculty currently employed at the same educational institution. Thus, the perception of

VPC is an important variable to assess when attempting to understand employee strains across several occupational contexts.

In regard to the expectations generated from SET, trust mediated the relationship between perceptions of VPC and job satisfaction, turnover intentions, physical symptoms, and burnout. Additionally, the direct effect failed to be significant for all four mediational analyses. This pattern of evidence is supportive of trust fully mediating these relationships such that perceptions of VPC no longer significantly predicted workplace strain outcomes when trust was partialled. Thus, employee perceptions of VPC may be associated with employee health in part because of fluctuations in perceptions of trust with the organization.

Theoretical Contributions

These findings yield important theoretical implications for the literature. First, adopting a relational lens when investigating VPC has yielded an additional path that may underlie the relationship between perceptions of VPC and employee strains. In addition to expectancy of future violence and negative emotions, trust also appears to play a mediational role. Trust may be particularly relevant when discussing VPC, because it is potentially an essential component of what makes employees feel safe. If employees are unable to trust that their employer can keep them from being a victim of violence, they may also not trust their employer to fulfill a broad range of needs. Similar to perceptions of justice, employees may use perceptions of VPC as an indicator of how dependable and committed the organization is to the welfare of the employee. Therefore, adopting a relational lens when investigating VPC is recommended as it may influence the perception of important workplace relationships.

The results of the current study also highlight the importance of trust in the organizational setting. Trust has been associated with several important workplace outcomes and there is evidence that it may play a mediational role between employee perceptions (e.g., VPC and justice perceptions) and important workplace outcomes. There may be a wide range of employee perceptions that have a similar relational implication similar to perceptions of VPC. For instance, the employee's perceptions of job demands may also influence their trust in the organization. Future research should continue to assess trust when investigating the large domain of employee perceptions.

Practical Implications

There are also important practical implications that emerge when considering the results of the current investigation. Supervisors should be concerned with employee perceptions of VPC. Even if the workplace

has few incidents of violence, employees may not trust the organization if they do not believe that the organization is actively addressing the issue of workplace violence with appropriate policies, procedures, and pressures. Encouraging a violence prevention climate in the workplace may enhance the well-being of employees and their job attitudes. Although not directly tested in this investigation, a strong VPC may also enhance the quality of social exchanges among the organization and incumbent employees.

Supervisors should consider the range of associations between perceptions of VPC and workplace strain outcomes. More specifically, perceptions of VPC were associated with both psychological and physiological symptoms of strain. Additionally, they were related to both job attitudes and behavioral intentions. Supervisors should also be aware that exposure to a low VPC may act as a stressor in relation to incumbent employees and a wide domain of strain reactions may be observed. Thus, supervisors may want to remain vigilant in regard to a multitude of strain reactions when threats to the VPC emerge (e.g., incidents of violence).

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. For instance, the sample size was relatively small for tests of mediation. To ameliorate any potential negative effects of having a small sample size, a bootstrapping approach was adopted to test for indirect effects as recommended by Fritz and MacKinnon (2007). Given this approach, the sample is expected to be large enough to detect medium to large indirect effects. Although the current sample was large enough to test the current set of hypotheses, a larger sample size would yield more power to detect a range of smaller effects that may be important. For instance, investigating VPC at the facet level may contribute significantly to our understanding of the construct.

Another limitation of the current study is the self-report design of the survey administration. Given the high correlations across focal variables, the reported associations may have been inflated due to the biasing effect of common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). However, there has not been strong evidence to suggest that alternate sources would be more accurate in assessing an employee's perceptions, cognitions, and strain. For this particular investigation, self-reports of our focal constructs are expected to be the most appropriate source of information, though there may be some degree of bias present in the data. For instance, recruiting participants by using workplace e-mail may have yielded some degree of bias related to social desirability. Thus, future research should attempt to replicate the reported results with

a design that collects data from a variety of sources and recruitment techniques (see Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002).

The cross-sectional design of the survey is also a limitation. Although the mediational analyses assume the directionality of our effects, the cross-sectional design precludes any inferences of causality. For example, employee trust in the organization may have influenced perceptions of VPC and subsequent strain reactions. Future research should implement a longitudinal design in order to begin testing the direction of these paths.

Although the general pattern of associations observed in the current study was congruent with SET, several of the scales have not previously been subjected to a thorough validation effort. Evidence of the validity of the focal measures could be established by utilizing multitrait-multimethod designs. Full validation efforts for the focal scales would likely yield greater confidence in the accuracy of the measures. Additionally, the multitrait-multimethod design would allow researchers to investigate the degree of method bias that may be influencing the observed relationships.

Finally, the results from the current investigation should be interpreted with caution as the data was nested within one university. The generalizability of the results may be limited as the data do not contain variance from a wide range of organizations. Factors unique to organizations may influence the incidents of violence and the frequency of violence prevention initiatives. Additionally, factors unique to organizations may also influence employee awareness and perceptions of such initiatives. For instance, the presence of an active police force on campus may result in more resources available to prevent incidents of violence and allow for more direct modes of communication regarding violence prevention policies. However, the presence of police officers on campus may also bias perceptions of VPC. Employees that are exposed to police officers on campus may assume a strong VPC, regardless of the underlying effectiveness of the ongoing violence prevention initiatives. Although it is beyond the scope of the current investigation, future research should investigate the wide range of contextual factors that are present across organizational settings that may limit or alter the generalizability of the current results.

When interpreting the results of the current study, several recommendations for future research can be identified. One potential avenue for a follow-up study is to compare the effect sizes across focal variables. VPC may differentially relate across strain outcomes. For example, perceptions of VPC may be more strongly related to job satisfaction than physical symptoms. A finer grained analysis may reveal more about the nature of these relationships. Additionally, future research

should continue to investigate other potential processes that may help to explain the main effects reported in this study. For instance, there is evidence that organizational cynicism is related to several important workplace outcomes and has been conceptualized as being distinct from the construct of trust (Chiaburuet al., 2013). Although organizational cynicism may be particularly relevant to the current investigation, there are likely a host of influencing variables that can aid in understanding the associations between perceptions of VPC and workplace strain outcomes. There may also be important individual differences that are vital when employees are forming their perception of VPC. For instance, different demographics of the population (e.g., gender and ethnicity) may look to different features of the organization to form an opinion regarding the VPC of their organization. Additionally, the relative importance of perceptions of VPC may vary across different portions of the population. Finally, future research may benefit by assessing contextual factors across organizational settings. Perceptions of VPC may be more important in some jobs and the observed effects may be enhanced. Comparing the effect sizes across jobs that vary by frequency and severity of violence incidents may reveal interesting trends in relation to employee strain.

Conclusion

The current study attempted to explore potential mediating effects of the relationships between perceptions of VPC and workplace strain outcomes. In general, the results provided support for the mediational role across all measures of employee strain. The evidence presented here suggests that trust may play an important role in explaining effects between perceptions of VPC and employee wellbeing. Moreover, there may be utility in adopting a relational framework when investigating the nature of the observed relationships between perceptions of VPC and workplace strains.

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