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The Mediating Role of Interactional Justice on Psychological Stress with Psychological Well-Being in the Jordanian Qualified Industrial Zones

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Abstract

This study investigated whether interactional justice mediated the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being among local employees in the Jordanian Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) in Jordan. Data was collected using questionnaire from a sample of 494 local employees from various QIZ in Jorda. Using SPSS and AMOS, the findings show that interactional justice mediates the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being. The research contributes to the body of knowledge and supports the role of interactional justice in addressing psychological stress to enhance psychological well-being of employees.

Key Words: *Interactional Justice, Psychological Stress, Psychological Well-Being, Jordanian Qualified Industrial Zones.*

Introduction

The main reasons of establishing Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) in Jordan were the creation of jobs for the Jordanians and foreign exchange earnings for Jordan. The first Jordanian QIZ established in 1997 and the expansion of the zones spread all over the country. Majority of the enterprises in these zones are textile manufacturers. The textile industry is considered as the number one employer in the QIZ, with a total of 52,429 which is 97% of 54,000 employees in 2006 working in the textile and garment sector (Jordan Ministry of Labor, March 2007). However minimum wage, long working hours, poor working place, lack of stability, no motivation in the Jordanian textile industry have led to the reduction of Jordanian local employees from 55.8% in 2002 to 23.9% in 2010 (Jordanian Ministry of Labor, 2006). According to Jordan Ministry of Labor (2012) the total local employees in QIZ was 8,601.

The poor working conditions in QIZ lead to employees staging a strike in 2007 (International Trade Union Confederation ITUC, 2008) and another strike in 2011. This led to the Better Work project implemented by the ILO in cooperation with International Finance Cooperation (IFC), the Ministry of Labor and the Trade Union of Workers in Textiles. According to ILO (2012), the level of compliance with OSH laws and

regulations is very low and that thousands of workers in these QIZ areas are still subjected to various types of violations (The Jordanian Labor Watch / Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies, 2011).

The recent events suggest that the needs of employees and their expectations of the jobs and workplace are not met appropriately and the strikes are manifestation of interactional justice which affects the employees' attitudes about the system (e.g., organizational commitment, trust in authorities) (Ambrose et al., 2007). Poor working conditions in QIZ, low wages and long working hours create undue psychological stress on the Jordanian local employees' psychological well-being to handle the demands of the enterprises and stay on even with bad working conditions. This study attempts to investigate the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being and whether interactional justice mediates this relationship among the local workers in the Jordanian textile industry.

Literature Review

Lazarus and Folkman (1984:25) define psychological stress as "external (environmental) and internal (personal) demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Lazarus (1993) believed that "psychological stress should be considered part of a large topic, the emotion." For when there is stress, there are also emotions that can be attached to it—positive and negative emotions (Lazarus, 1999). The concern for reducing psychological stress and enhancing quality of work life and working conditions is the priority of organizations. Psychological stress is likely to result if ones job is high strain in nature, characterized by high work-related demands, few opportunities for control or autonomy, and /or insufficient social support (Karasek, 1979; Karasek and Theorell, 1990).

Psychological well-being refers to the psychological state of individuals, as assessed through affective and cognitive components (Diener, Scollon, and Lucas, 2003). Robertson and Cooper (2011:54) define psychological well-being as the "affective and purposive psychological state that people experience while they are at work". Improving psychological well-being will enhance quality of work life which brings benefits for both the organization and the individuals. Wright and Cropanzano (2004) define psychological well-being with three characteristics:

First, it is a subjective experience, which means people experience well-being to the extent that they believe themselves to be happy. Secondly, psychological well-being is considered to be a combination of positive and negative emotions where higher level of positive emotions over negative emotions represents better psychological well-being. Finally, psychological well-being is a global judgment, that is, it refers to one's life as a whole and it has been shown to exhibit consistency over time. Employees with a high level of psychological well-being are better, more committed, and more productive than employees with a low level of psychological well-being (Wright and Bonett, 2007; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004).

According to Bies and Moag (1986) one of the branches stemming from the tree of organizational justice is interactional justice which focuses on employees' perceptions of the interpersonal behavior exercised during the representation of decisions and procedures. Interactional justice is described as "the interpersonal treatment employees receive from decision makers and the adequacy with which the formal decision-making procedures are explained" (Greenberg, 1990). Interactional justice describes the fairness in the manner in which the procedures are carried out (Moorman, 1991). Interactional justice reflects the quality of interaction or treatment between employees in an organization (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Hypothesis Development

As shown in Figure 1, the researchers adopt social exchange theory by Blau (1964) to explain the relationship between psychological stress, interactional justice and psychological well-being.

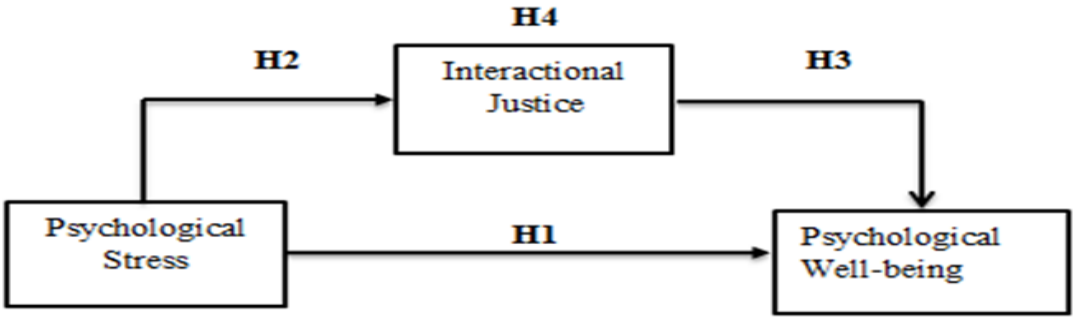

Figure 1. Framework of the Study

Psychological well-being is one of the major dimensions of quality of work life. According to Diener, Lucas and Oishi (2002), psychological well-being is a subjective experience and can be defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluation of his or her life. Improving psychological well-being will enhance quality of work life which brings benefits for both the organization and the individuals. Psychological stress is one of the major dimensions of occupational stress. Whereas several researchers have found negative relationship between occupational stress and quality of work life (Bolhari, Rezaeean, Bolhari, and Zare, 2012; Charu, 2012; Akintayo, 2012), there is lack of studies examining the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being and posited that:

H_1: There is a significant relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being among the Jordanian employees in QIZ.

Perception of injustice is caused by discrepancy between efforts and rewards, resembles assumptions behind most of the classic occupational stress theories (Vermunt and Steensma, 2001). Justice measures the employees' experience of fairness and unfairness, because well-being of the employees is the main focal point of the occupational stress research. Bohacik (2008) found a positive relationship between procedural justice and distributive justice and occupational stress in his study of 400 federal employees. Another study by Judge and Colquitt (2004) found negative relationship between organizational justice and stress in their study of sample size was 212 Participants were faculty employed at 23 universities in the United States. No studies have been found to link psychological stress to interactional justice. Therefore, the present study looks at psychological stress and interactional justice and posits that:

H2: There is a significant relationship between interactional justice and psychological well-being among the Jordanian employees in QIZ.

Rani, Garg and Rastogi (2012) found a negative relationship between interactional justice and the dimensions of psychological wellbeing (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relationship with others, and self-acceptance). Therefore is posited that:

H3: There is a significant relationship between interactional justice and psychological well-being among the Jordanian employees in QIZ.

Whereas interactional justice has been found to mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee outcomes (Aryee et al., 2007; Tepper, 2000), no studies have looked at the mediating effect of interactional justice between psychological stress and psychological well-being. The researchers adopted interactional justice as mediator between psychological stress and psychological well-being based on previous studies by Rani, Garg, Rastogi (2012), Tomlinson (2012), and Ismail, Mashkuri, Sulaiman, and Hock (2010). Therefore it is posited that:

H_4: Interactional justice mediates the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being among the Jordanian employees in QIZ.

Methodology

For the present study, the population of this study is the total number of Jordanian employees (N=8,601) from six textile manufacturers in QIZ located in different cities in Jordan. The sample size 864 has been chosen to achieve the target of this study. The questionnaire was based on scales adapted from previous studies. Psychological stress was based on Beehr (2001); Cox, (2000); Newell, (2002) using 7 items on a scale 1 (never) to 5 (always). Psychological well-being was based on Ryff (1989) with 43 items on a scale 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Interactional justice was based on Niehoff and Moorman (1993) with 9 items and using the scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data analysis was performed using SPSS and AMOS.

From a total of 864 distributed questionnaires, 494 questionnaires were deemed useful after removal of outliers. The profile of respondents are as follows: male (35.6%), female (64.4%), age 18 to 25 years (33.2%), 26 to 35 (44.3%), 36 to 45 (19.6%), 46 to 55 and above (2.85). Marital status - single (66.8%), married (24.9%), widowed (3.8%), divorce (4.5%). Education level - high school (30.2%), diploma (45.7%), bachelor (19.8), others (4.3%). Experience up to 2 years (36.4%), up to 4 (11.7%), up to 6 (24.10%), up to 8 (9.9%), above 8 years (17.8%). Salary - Jordanian dinar, up to JD 120 (2.6%), up to JD 150 (6.5%), up to JD 180 (27.3%), above JD 180 (63.6%). Position - Maintenance (13.6%), Production (62.1 %), Service (7.7%), Design (16.6%).

Findings

Measurement Model

In this study, measurement model was used to examine the relationship between independent variables and the outcome variable. Measurement model is the second level of analysis in structural equation modeling which is considered as part of data preparation because it is used to access normality of the measurement instruments. Three confirmatory factor analyses were used to assess the overall measurement model for psychological stress (PS), psychological well-being (PWB) and interactional justice (IJ).

The first CFA model of PS was made up of 7 items. The χ^2 was 29.949, df =14, p-value=008, GFI=0.984, and AGFI=0.967. Furthermore, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) result was 0.48 which is accepted and below 0.10. The second CFA model of PWB was made up of 43 items and some items were removed because they were below the recommended cut-off value of 0.50 and χ^2=37.343, df=9, GFI=0.977, AGFI=0.946 and RMSEA=0.080. The third CFA model of IJ with 9 items and the factor loading were above the cut-off 0.5, therefore no items was removed. The measurement model of interactional justice showed relatively perfect fit with directories with χ^2= 80.427, df =41, GFI=0.99, AGFI=0.940 and RMSEA= 0.063.

In this study, measurement model was used to examine the relationship between (independent) variables and the outcome (dependent) variable. Therefore, the analysis of measurement model using AMOS shows that the structural model is fit, which means the model fits the data as illustrated by the following Goodness-of-Fit indices in figure 4.2 below; χ^2 (CMIN) = 464.032 (df = 206), relative χ^2 (CMIN/df) = 2.253, AGFI = .904, GFI = .922, CFI = .976, IFI = .976, TLI = .973, RMSEA = .050 and RMR = .026. Conventionally, relative χ^2 (CMIN) should be < 5, while AGFI, GFI, CFI, IFI and TLI should be > .9 (Bentler, 1983; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Byrne, 2010) and RMSEA and RMR should be < .08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1989; MacCallum et al. 1996; cited in Bryne, 2010). According Hair et al., (2009) if any 3 – 4 of

the Goodness-of-Fit indices are within the threshold then the entire model is fit therefore, based on this reason the structural model for this study fits the data. Furthermore, Hu (2006) suggested that, RMSEA and RMR should be ≤ .056 and .065 respectively, which fall within the adequate range as suggested by Hu (2006).

Once the uni-dimensionality of the constructs was achieved, each of the constructs was assessed for their reliability and validity. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), whilst for validity using construct, including convergent and discriminant. Table 2 represents the result of Cronbach's alpha and convergent validity for the overall measurement model. The AVE ranged from .49 to .73, was above the cut-off 0.50 for all second-order constructs as suggested by Nunnally and Berge (1994). The composite reliability values exceeded the recommended value of .60 for all constructs as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) ranging from .82 to .94.

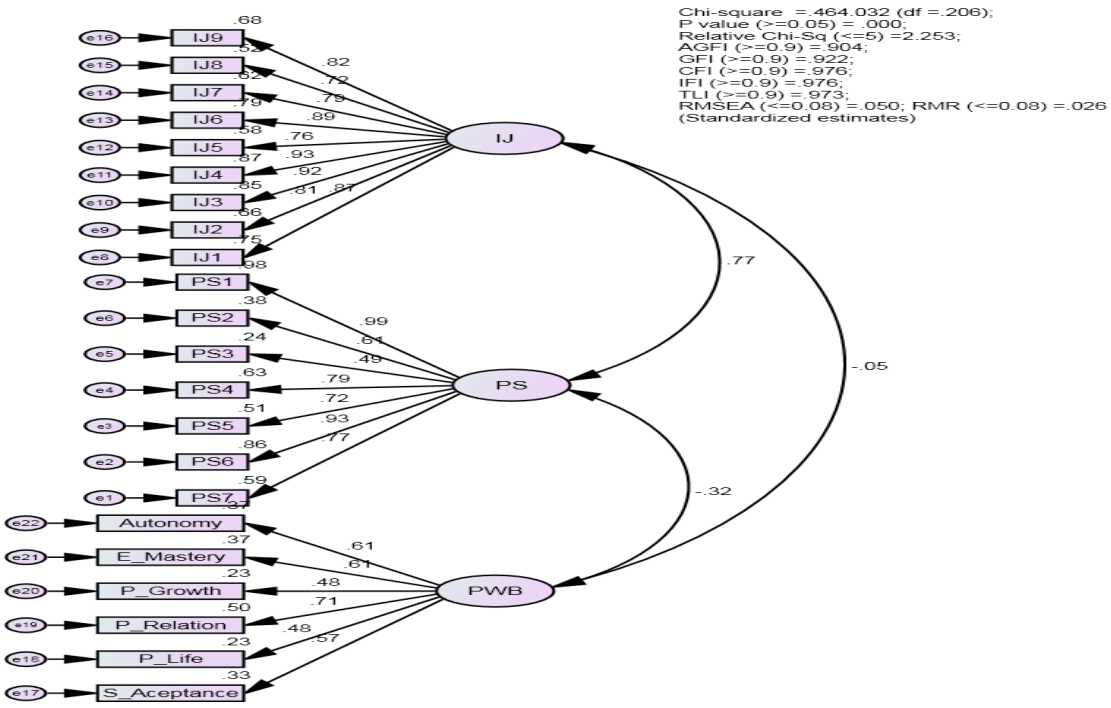

Figure 2. Overall Measurement Model

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Constructs Validity

Constructs	Items	1st Order CFA	2nd Order CFA	AVE > 0.5	CR> 0.7
Psychological Stress	7		-	.53	.88
Interactional Justice	9		-	.77	.97
Autonomy	10		-	.62	.94
Environmental-Mastery	6		-	.51	.86
Personal Growth	6		-	.52	.87
Positive- Relationship	8	8	6	.73	.94
Purpose in Life	6	6	5	.59	.88
Self-Acceptance	7	7	5	.50	.82

Structural Model

Structural equation modeling is the third level of analysis so, in this study, structural equation modeling was used to examine the individual and collective contribution of set of predictors (independent) variables entered in to the equation in relation to the outcome (dependent) variable. Therefore, the analysis of structural equation modeling using AMOS shows that the structural model is fit, which means the model fits the data as illustrated by the following Goodness-of-Fit indices in figure 4.2 below; χ^2 (CMIN) = 464.032 (df = 206), relative χ^2 (CMIN/df) = 2.253, AGFI = .904, GFI = .922, CFI = .976, IFI = .976, TLI = .973, RMSEA = .050 and RMR = .026. Conventionally, relative χ^2 (*CMIN*) should be < 5, while *AGFI, GFI, CFI, IFI* and *TLI* should be > .9 (Bentler, 1983; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Bryne, 2010) and *RMSEA* and *RMR* should be < .08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1989; MacCallum et al. 1996; cited in Byrne, 2010). According Hair et al., (2009) if any 3 – 4 of the Goodness-of-Fit indices are within the threshold then the entire model is fit therefore, based on this reason the structural model for this study fits the data.

The testing of hypothesis, the relationship between the variables shows direct effect of the variables. The standardized regression weight and the result of the hypothesis direct effect are displayed in Table 4 which shows that the hypothesized relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being was not supported (β = -.71, CR = -6.64, p = .000). This shows that there is no direct significant relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being, which suggest that psychological stress is not a significant predictor of psychological well-being. This finding is in line with the relationship between occupational stress and quality of work life been examined by different researchers in different studies.

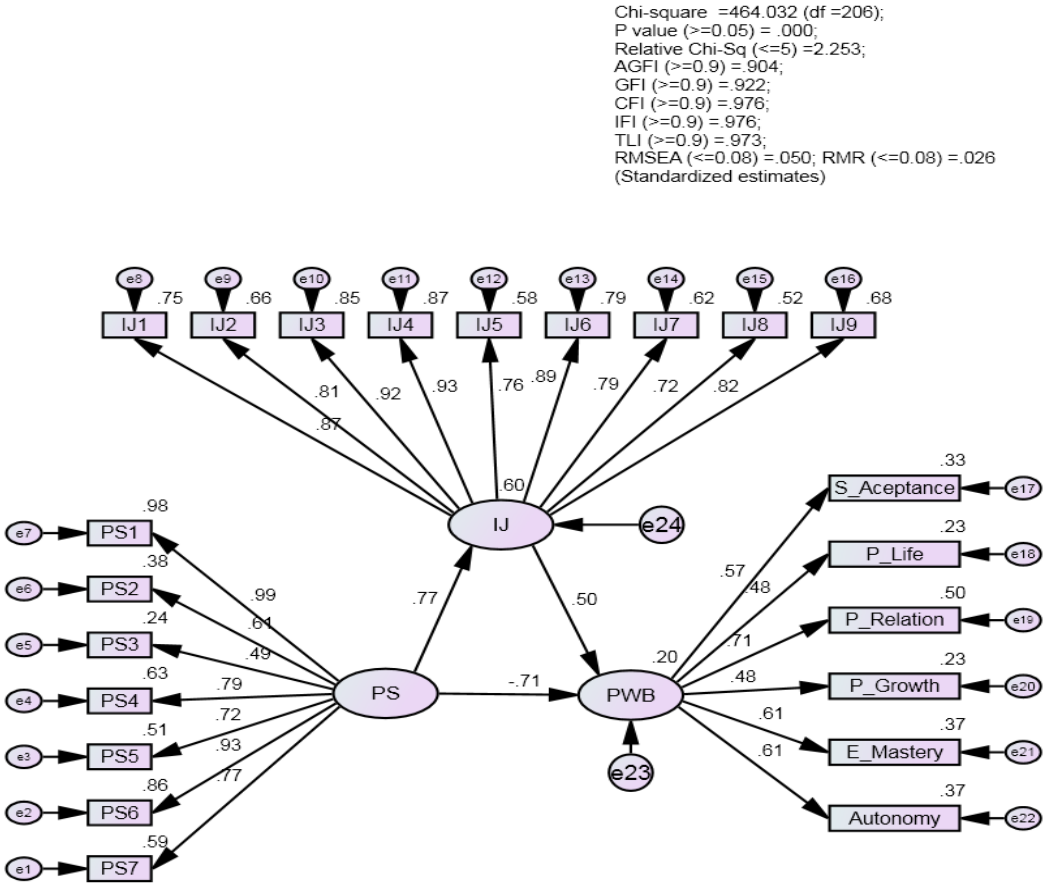

Figure 3. Structural Model

Table 4. Unstandardized and standardized regression weight

Hypothesized relationships			B	SE	B	CR	P
Interactional Justice	←	Psychological Stress	.85	.06	.78	15.40	.000
Psychological Well-Being	←	Psychological Stress	-.48	.07	-.71	-6.64	.000
Psychological Well-Being	←	Interactional Justice	.31	.06	.50	5.19	.000

Note: B = Unstandardized Regression Weight Estimate; SE = Standard Error; β = Standardized Regression Weight Estimate; CR = Critical Ratio; p = Significant *p*.

In determining the mediating effect of interactional justice in the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being, hypothesis H_4 was proposed. According to Hayes (2013) when testing a causal process that contains mediation components, the concern is on the estimation and interpretation of the indirect effects together with their inferential tests. To attain these effects, the estimation of the constituent component of the indirect effects is necessary; that is the effect of **X** on **M** (*a* path) and the effect of **M** on **Y** (*b* path). The standardized regression weights for the two paths are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Standardized Regression Weight

Structural Path	β *a*-path	β *b*-path
Interactional Justice ← Psychological Stress	.78**	
Psychological Well-Being ← Interactional Justice		.50**

Note: β = Standardized Regression Weight; *p < .05.

To draw conclusion about the significance of the effects for this study, bootstrapping method was employed based on the 95% bias – corrected confidence interval (CI). The decision criteria follows that when zero (0) is outside confidence interval (CI) then, indirect effect is significant, otherwise the effect is insignificant (Byrne, 2010; Hayes, 2013). Results of the indirect effect test based on bootstrap bias – corrected 95% CI is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Bootstrap Analysis

			Bootstrap BC 95% CI	
Construct	SIE	SE	LB	UB
Psychological Stress	.29	.06	.29	.55

As shown in Tables 5 and 6 above, there is an evidence of indirect effect between psychological stress and psychological well-being through interactional justice (β = .78, p < .05) which interactional justice, in turn, affects psychological well-being (β = .50, p < .05). The Mean indirect effect from bootstrap analysis of psychological stress is positive and significant (*ab* = .06), with a 95% CI lie between .29 and .55. Thus, as zero is outside this range, hypothesis H_4 is supported. Therefore, the findings of the study demonstrate that psychological stress is directly related to psychological well-being through interactional justice.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being. Hypothesis 1 proposed a negative relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being. The results of the study revealed a significant relationship between psychological

stress and psychological well-being. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being has not well researched in the literature. The researcher found only one study on the relationship between occupational stress and quality of work life Bolhari, Rezaeean, Bolhari, and Zare (2012) among the Information Technology Staff.

This study touched upon the real dimensions of the lack of relationship of the Jordanian employers and employees in the Qualified Industrial zones in Jordan. Jordan's textile industry is the major provider for employment accounting for 97% of employment in QIZ. However, minimum wage, long working hours, poor working place, lack of stability, no motivations lead to the local Jordanians job seekers avoids engaging to work in QIZs with these worse working conditions as well as the working conditions and the employer treats lead to rise the psychological stress on the employees.

This study found that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological stress and interactional justice similar to Bohacik (2008). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies were found to link the relationship between interactional justice and psychological well-being. In investigating whether interactional justice mediates the relationship between psychological stress and psychological well-being, the finding of the study showed that psychological stress is directly affected by psychological well-being through interactional justice. The results also show that there is a significant positive relationship between interactional justice and psychological well-being. This is in contrast to Garg and Rastogi (2012) who pointed out that there is a positive relationship between interactional justice and psychological well-being. Interactional justice was positively linked with psychological indicators of QWL including satisfaction, positive effect, and self-realization (e.g., Lam and Chen, 2012, Sabahi, 2010). The explanation for interactional justice in the workplace is grounded in social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

The results of this study have shown that psychological stress in QIZ is high and its impact on the psychological well-being of the local workers who accept these difficult conditions. The study demonstrated that the influential factor in these negative feelings is the absence of justice and exploitation of many of the workers needed for this job. Furthermore, the results suggest that good and mutual relationship between the employees and the employers based on respect lead to reduce stress and enhance the positive relationship. Interactions based on justice in workplace has a significant impact on changing conditions and negative results into positive results by giving all workers their rights and work to improve working conditions commensurate with the labor laws and workers, resulting in decreased stress and create a positive environment.

In conclusion, the current study found significant effect of interactional justice on the relationship between psychological stress with psychological well-being. Given the poor working conditions in QIZ, low wages and long working hours that create undue psychological stress on the Jordanian local employees' psychological well-being, this paper attempts to provide evidence to support the idea that employers should treat their employees with fairness and respect and understand the demands and needs among the local workers in the Jordanian textile industry. The authors propose that further study can be conducted to explain how psychological stress at work can affect the employee's psychological well-being and help to create a balance between work and life.

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