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# Development and Validation of the Workplace Dignity Scale

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## Development and Validation of the Workplace Dignity Scale

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**ABSTRACT** As organizational scholars have become critically attuned to human flourishing in the workplace, interest in workplace dignity has grown rapidly. Yet, a valid scale to measure employees' perceptions of dignity in the workplace has yet to be developed, thereby limiting potential empirical insights. To fill this need, we conducted a systematic, multi-study scale development project. Using data generated from focus groups (N = 62), an expert panel (N = 11), and two surveys (N = 401 and N = 542), we developed and validated an 18-item Workplace Dignity Scale (WDS). Our studies reveal evidence in support of the WDS's psychometric properties, as well as its content, construct, and criterion-related validity. Our structural models support predictive relationships between workplace characteristics (e.g., dirty work, income insufficiency) and dignity. Moreover, we observed the incremental validity of workplace dignity to account for variance in employee engagement, burnout, and turnover intentions above and beyond the explanatory effects of organizational respect and meaningful work. These results demonstrate the promise of the WDS for organizational research.

**Keywords:** Humanistic Management, Meaningful Work, Respect, Scale Development, SEM Modeling, Scale Validation, Workplace Dignity

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, organizational behavior and management scholars have been critically attuned to quality of worklife issues—especially those phenomena that impede human flourishing. For example, steady streams of research on incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2012), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007), and workplace bullying (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2014) all center on denials of respect in the workplace. Researchers studying dirty work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014; Rivera, 2014) are concerned with the ways that stigma is experienced and managed by employees who perform devalued and disparaged work. Examinations of inequality in organizations (Suddaby et al., 2018)—whether economic inequality (e.g., poverty and low wage work; Leana et al., 2012) or social inequality (the institutionalization of social class; Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013)—share an implicit commitment to reducing disadvantage so that all individuals have greater opportunities to thrive. Each of these research areas, although not specifically about dignity, invokes broader issues of dignity in the workplace.

At the same time, researchers across a wide range of disciplines have been explicitly foregrounding dignity in their examinations of work and workplaces. The majority of research to date has been conducted with ethnographic methods, which has revealed rich and nuanced accounts of problematic workplaces, employee vulnerabilities, and responses to dignity threats ranging from identity work and coping to resistance and retaliation. For instance, researchers have studied the abuse and humiliation of nurses (Khademi et al., 2012), the social and career harms inflicted on LGBTQ employees (Baker & Lucas, 2017), the stigmatization of custodians (Rabelo, 2017), the undervalued occupational status of childcare workers (Nelson & Lewis, 2016), the economic insecurity of day laborers (Purser, 2009), the objectification of fashion models (Mears & Finlay, 2005), and the dehumanization of professional athletes (Dufur & Feinberg, 2007), to name only some. On one hand, this ethnographic approach is a strength as it points to the multitude of ways dignity can be threatened in the workplace. But on the other hand, the breadth of the varied manifestations of dignity (or lack thereof) surfaced in these studies positions dignity as so broad and all-encompassing that the construct of workplace dignity is rendered unwieldy and impractical for purposes of systematic inquiry (see Macklin, 2003).

In contrast to ethnographic research, empirical research involving quantitative measurement on workplace dignity is far less common. Moreover, existing quantitative studies (Crowley, 2012, 2013, 2014; Hodson, 1996, 2001, 2007; Hodson & Roscigno, 2004; Lucas et al., 2017) are based on the same single dataset—Hodson’s (2004) Workplace Ethnography Project—which surprisingly does not contain a measure of workplace dignity. Rather, it is an inventory of work variables that Hodson (2007) later described as fitting under the umbrella term of “working with dignity.” Therefore, researchers using this dataset resort to using various combinations of workplace variables as a proxy for workplace dignity (see Lucas et al., 2017 for a summary). While these studies have contributed to understanding the relationship between dignity and such things as control systems, managerial behavior, overwork, and counterproductive work behaviors, the absence of a measure of workplace dignity prevents any of these insights from being replicated or other hypothesized relationships from being tested in new contexts.

Given a lack of clarity about the construct of workplace dignity and the lack of a valid scale to measure it, empirical and theoretical development of workplace dignity has been stunted. As such, workplace dignity has not been nearly as useful a construct in organizational research as one might expect. A valid scale would enable researchers and practitioners to

examine workplace dignity more directly and systematically—whether that is assessing existing levels of dignity, determining to what extent various risk factors and interventions affect levels of workplace dignity, and to understand what outcomes workplace dignity may most potently affect. Therefore, we aimed to develop such a scale. Below, we provide a brief summary of workplace dignity theory and research that informs our scale development efforts.

### WORKPLACE DIGNITY

Workplace dignity has deep roots in philosophy and sociology. In the late 1700s, philosopher Immanuel Kant explained that all things have either a dignity or a price. He positioned humans as having dignity, meaning that they are “above all price” and possess intrinsic worth (Sayer, 2007). Years later, sociological and political theorists extended this conversation to human *workers*. In the 1820s, Karl Marx wrote at length about the alienation and exploitation of workers. He argued that when capitalists purchased labor as cheaply as possible, it reflected little regard for the inherent dignity of workers (Healy & Wilkowska, 2017). In the 1920s, Max Weber’s writings on bureaucracy critiqued structures that stripped workers of their autonomy, reified social status structures that led to “snobbish” attitudes, and otherwise undermined worker dignity through petty authoritarianism (Titunik, 1995). In the 1930s, Émile Durkheim also was concerned with dignity in the workplace, drawing attention to a state of normlessness in organizations that led to emotional and physical abuse of employees (Hodgkiss, 2013). These foundational ideas remain integral to current understandings of workplace dignity.

Recently, the cause of dignity at work has been taken up by scholars from the subfield of humanistic management. At the heart of the humanistic management paradigm is a commitment to advocate for and engage in management practices that protect human dignity and promote well-being. Drawing from a Kantian view of dignity, humanistic management scholars such as Pirson (2017) maintain that organizations and managers have a duty to both protect and promote the dignity of individuals. In this vein, Donaldson and Walsh (2015) advance a theory of business that positions the protection and promotion of all participants’ dignity as the ultimate purpose of business and the standard by which success should be judged.

Scholars have attempted to outline conditions under which dignity is threatened or protected. For instance, Hodson (2001) identifies overwork, mismanagement and abuse, incursions on production autonomy, and forced participation as primary violations of dignity. Bolton (2007) describes dignity as being upheld by both subjective factors (meaningful work, autonomy, respect) and objective factors (job security, financial reward, equality of opportunity, and safe and healthy working conditions). Yet these lists of factors do not advance a true theory of dignity.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) offers a partial theoretical explanation of workplace dignity. SIT positions that individuals’ self-concept and self-esteem are influenced by membership in salient social groups. In a work context, occupation and organization—and especially social standing of these groups—become part of workers’ identity (Ellemers et al., 2004). Social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, disability) also are important. These identities can be a source of dignity or dignity threat. Particularly when an occupational identity (e.g., dirty work; Hamilton et al., 2017) or social identity (e.g., LGBTQ sexuality; Baker & Lucas, 2017) is devalued, the identity itself can make individuals targets for identity-sensitive inequalities that deny their dignity (Sayer, 2011). But at the same time, those

identities and group memberships can be called upon as a resource for identity work and coping that bolster self-recognized worth (e.g., such as blue-collar workers crafting a positive identity by making comparisons to low- and high-status outgroups; Lucas, 2011). However, social identity theory cannot fully explain workplace dignity. There are plenty of dignity threats (Ayers et al., 2008) and responses (Karlsson, 2012) that are not grounded in social identities. For instance, individuals who are arbitrarily singled out as targets for employee emotional abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003) may experience deep injuries to dignity, but their numerous social identities may be neither a source of the injury nor a resource for rebuilding dignity.

Therefore, in absence of a theory of workplace dignity, we center our scale development around Lucas's (2017, p. 2549) broad definition of workplace dignity: "the self-recognized and other-recognized worth acquired from (or injured by) engaging in work activity." Here we highlight four key principles that need to be addressed by a functional, psychometrically sound measure.

The first principle of workplace dignity is its tendency to be communicatively bound and manifest in interaction (Lucas, 2015). The terms "self-recognized" and "other-recognized" in the definition of workplace dignity indicate that dignity is both dependent upon the assessments individuals have of their own worth, as well as the extent to which others signal their acknowledgement of that worth, such as through respectful interaction. In fact, Hodson (2001, p. 3) includes "to appreciate the respect of others" as an essential element within his conceptualization of dignity. Similarly, Sayer (2007) claims that it is respectful interaction that recognizes human worth that extends beyond an immediate economic exchange. Even material concerns are experienced communicatively. For instance, the sting of dirty work is experienced not as much in the physical dirt itself as it is by being treated by others as invisible or less-than (Kensbock et al., 2014). Economic precarity is experienced by employees unable to defend themselves from verbal abuse for fear of losing their much-needed jobs (Stuesse, 2010).

A second principle of workplace dignity is its subjective and self-construed nature. Similar to workplace autonomy, which is a professional experience subjectively perceived, situationally affected, and an outcome and an antecedent (Deci & Ryan, 1985), workplace dignity is a self-construal. Cultural expectations and social norms, such as Christian theology (Sison et al., 2016), Kantian philosophy (Sayer, 2007), and discourses about what constitutes good or "real" work (Clair, 1996), certainly influence dignity judgments. However, it is the individual who is the ultimate arbiter of her or his experience of workplace dignity (Lee, 2008).

A third principle of workplace dignity lay in its seemingly contradictory composition. What distinguishes workplace dignity from human dignity is that the former is composed of two sources of worth. Human dignity is founded on the premise of *inherent* dignity, which is the belief that all people are entitled to an equal and unconditional worth simply for being human. In contrast, workplace dignity is founded on inherent dignity and *earned* dignity, which is the worth accrued through instrumental contributions on the job and, as such, is variable and conditional (Hodson, 2001). While inherent and earned dignities logically contradict one another (i.e., unconditional and equal value opposes the notion of conditional and unequal value), in practice they are more complementary and intertwined (Pirson, 2017).

A final principle of workplace dignity is its bivalent nature. As Lucas (2017, p. 2551) stated, dignity "tends to be understood and experienced by its absence rather than its presence." This means that people typically cannot conceptualize dignity without also

attending to indignity. For instance, when people are asked to explain what dignity means to them, they often tell a story about their dignity being undermined. Therefore, workplace dignity appears to be analogous to Herzberg's (1968/2003) model of hygiene and motivating factors in that it has both positive elements that promote dignity and negative elements from which dignity must be protected.

Together, these four principles of workplace dignity guided our efforts to develop a scale for its measurement. Ideally, a scale would attend to the role of interaction with others, it would be based on self-report of perceptions, it would account for both inherent and earned bases of worth, and it would include both positively- and negatively-valenced items.

## **OVERVIEW OF STUDIES**

We followed recommendations for scale development and validation (DeVellis, 2016; Hinkin, 1995) to construct the Workplace Dignity Scale. In Study 1, we generated scale items based on focus group participants' reports of workplace dignity. Then we established content validity and reduced the number of scale items using a panel of expert judges. In Study 2, we further reduced the number of items based on factor analysis, tested a measurement model, and demonstrated the construct validity of the scale. In Study 3, we demonstrated the criterion-related validity of the scale based on structural models that included theorized antecedents and outcomes of workplace dignity. Below we describe each of the studies.

### **Study 1: Item Generation and Content Validity**

#### **Initial Item Generation**

We initiated our scale development with an exploratory, qualitative study. In the first step, we used newspaper ads and community bulletin board flyers to recruit participants from a mid-sized Midwestern city. In total, 62 working adults (Men = 31 and Women = 31; Mean age = 42) participated in focus groups designed to capture their personal meanings of workplace dignity. We asked participants to explain what the term "dignity at work" meant to them and to share specific examples of when they felt their dignity was both affirmed and denied at work. Next, we inductively analyzed their responses to identify themes (Tracy, 2013). After multiple iterations of coding, four primary themes emerged: respectful interaction, recognition of competence and contribution, expressions of equality, and expressions of inherent value. See Lucas (2015) for more details.

In the next step, we wrote a conceptual definition for each theme, as well as a definition for a clearinghouse or "general" workplace dignity theme. We then independently generated 10–15 positively-valenced and 10–15 negatively-valenced items for each of the five themes, in accordance with the bivalent nature of workplace dignity. We worded each item as a first-person statement (e.g., "My work is a source of dignity for me."). We merged our lists, removed redundancies, clarified confusing or ambiguous wording, and eliminated items that did not receive unanimous support for inclusion. The result was an initial list of 97 items, which we then examined for content validity.

#### **Content Validity Assessment and Item Reduction**

In our next step, we further validated and reduced the item count with a quantitative analysis of expert ratings. This content validation approach provides empirical support for the relevance of item content, based on the combined judgment of experts (Lawshe, 1975). We recruited 11 experts in the area of workplace dignity to evaluate the face validity of the scale.

The panel of experts each published at least one article on the topic and, collectively, the panel represented diverse disciplinary perspectives (e.g., management, sociology, communication, psychology, theology). Expert judges completed a survey that contained a conceptual definition of each theme followed by the associated scale items. They rated how essential each item was for the measurement of its respective domain of workplace dignity, using a 3-point response scale (3 = Essential; 2= Useful but not essential; 1= Not necessary). For each theme, expert judges also had a space to provide open-ended feedback.

Based on ratings of the 11-member panel, we calculated content validity ratio (CVR) values for each item using the following formula:

$$\text{CVR} = \frac{n_e - \frac{n}{2}}{\frac{n}{2}}$$

where  $n_e$  refers to the number of experts who rated the item as essential and  $n$  refers to the total number of experts. If all experts agree the item is essential, the content validity ratio value for that item is 1. If fewer than half of all experts agree the item is essential, the content validity ratio value for that item is less than 0. We retained only items exceeding a CVR of .59, which is the critical value for a panel of 11 experts according to CVR critical value tables (Ayre & Scally, 2014; Lawshe, 1975). This step resulted in a 61-item pilot scale, which we used in Study 2.

### Study 2: Construct and Nomological Validity

For Study 2, our goals were to demonstrate the construct validity of the scale based on its nomological network, to examine the internal consistency of the scale, and to reduce the number of items to make the scale more parsimonious. To begin, we identified a nomological network of theoretically related workplace variables, including both positively and negatively related constructs, and developed hypotheses to test convergent and discriminant validity.

First, workplace dignity is related to the construct of interpersonal justice, as both are grounded in a set of moral and ethical expectations. Interpersonal justice is a component of a broader theoretical framework of organizational justice, which deals with overall perceptions of fair treatment involving distribution of resources, fairness of procedures, and quality of interaction. Specifically, interpersonal justice is defined as the quality of interpersonal treatment, as judged by several factors including respect (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt, 2001). Research has shown that respectful interaction is a vital component of dignity and that violations of norms of respect are grounds for dignity violations (Baker & Lucas, 2017; Hodson, 2001; Lucas, 2011). In fact, Sayer argues that respectful interaction in economic contexts is the very way that we “signal a non-instrumental valuation of them [other people] as person in their own right, and hence as having dignity” (2007, p. 569). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1a. Workplace dignity will relate positively to interpersonal justice.*

Second, workplace dignity is related to the construct of competence. As described previously, Hodson (2001) identified *earned* dignity as one of two basic meanings of dignity (the other being inherent dignity). In this meritocratic view of dignity, individuals gain their sense of worth through performing work and making instrumental contributions. The ability of workers to develop and exercise their capacities also can be a source of satisfaction and self-esteem (Sayer, 2009), and some argue a basic need (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Research has shown competence—from building competence to having competence recognized by others—

can be a source of personal dignity for employees, even in the face of other dignity constraints (Lucas, 2011; Stacey, 2005; Yalden & McCormack, 2010). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1b. Workplace dignity will relate positively to workplace competence.*

Third, workplace dignity is related to the construct of status. Status is defined as the respect and admiration that an individual has in the eyes of others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Blader and Yu (2017) argue that status and respect are inextricably entwined, as the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be respected (i.e., included, worthy, and valued) is largely dependent upon their status within their groups. Despite dignity being generally believed to be egalitarian and universal (at least in Western cultures; Brennan & Lo, 2007), there is ample research suggesting that dignity is not equally experienced. Implicit in much dignity research is a focus on the dignity threats experienced by workers who have lower social, occupational, or organizational statuses (Gunn, 2011; Nelson & Lewis, 2016; Yu, 2016, to name only a few), which demonstrates a relationship between dignity and status. As a corollary, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1c. Workplace dignity will relate positively to workplace status.*

Fourth, workplace dignity is related to the construct of incivility. Incivility is defined as insensitive behavior that displays a lack of regard for others (Anderson & Pearson, 1999) and is nearly synonymous with a lack of respect. Whether incivility manifests itself as slights, rudeness, ostracism, or outright abuse—and whether it was intended or not—it can inflict deep injury to the self-worth of the recipient of that uncivil behavior (Sypher, 2004). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 2a. Workplace dignity will relate negatively to workplace incivility.*

Fifth, workplace dignity is related to the construct of objectification. Objectification refers to a “splitting of a whole person into parts that serve specific goals and functions for the observer” (Gruenfeld et al., 2008, p. 111). Objectification is quite similar to the notion of reification, which is the treatment of human beings as replaceable, expendable, and disposable “things” (Islam, 2012, 2013) or general dehumanization. At its very core, then, objectification and reification are antithetical to human dignity, which is a belief that all humans—simply for the sake of being human—are above all price (Sayer, 2007). Several studies have documented the indignities and humiliation of objectification, from treatment as disposable objects to general dehumanization (Apostolidis, 2005; Barrett & Thomson, 2012; Mears & Finlay, 2005). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 2b. Workplace dignity will relate negatively to workplace objectification.*

Sixth, workplace dignity is related to the construct of alienation. Agassi defines alienating work as that which has “characteristics which cause mental, psychological, and/or psychosomatic damage to its performer” (1986, p. 272). Alienation and dignity have long been conceptually linked, going back to Marx’s original writing on the alienation of labor, where he argued that alienation from one’s work was an automatic denial of dignity (Hodson, 2001). Recent studies have shown that alienating practices in organizing and controlling work have led to violations of dignity (Crowley, 2012, 2014; Healy & Wilkowska, 2017). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 2c. Workplace dignity will relate negatively to workplace alienation.*



## Sample

Because we desired a diverse sample from across organizations, professions, ages, education levels, and income levels, we recruited respondents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk; Cheung et al., 2017). Despite some initial skepticism, organizational researchers increasingly are supporting the use of MTurk as an alternative to other sampling methods. Research has shown that MTurk samples produce reliable results and show no significant differences from other traditional samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2013). Others have argued that MTurk samples may, in some circumstances, be preferable to organizationally-based samples, especially when diversity across a broad pool is important (Landers & Behrend, 2015).

To be eligible to participate, individuals had to be at least 21 years old, currently work 30 hours or more per week in the United States, and possess at least two years of paid work experience. We identified these inclusion criteria to target respondents with substantial weekly and biographical work experiences. In total, we recruited a sample of 450 working adults, based on recommended minimum sample sizes for SEM analyses (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013). Participants were compensated \$0.60.

To further ensure high quality data for our study, we applied several filters for inclusion in the analyses: respondents' surveys had to be complete; they had to answer all attention checks correctly (Berinsky et al., 2014); and there could be no univariate (i.e.,  $z > 3.00$ ) and/or multivariate outlier indicators in their responses. We retained 401 responses for subsequent data analysis, for a complete and usable rate of 89%. We paid all participants, even if we did not use their survey responses for analysis. Respondents were evenly split by sex (51% Male), their ages ranged from 21–70 years old ( $M = 37.16$  years,  $SD = 10.89$  years), and there was some racial/ethnic diversity in the sample (70% White, 12% Asian, 7% Black, and 4% Latino). The majority (67%) of respondents held at least a 4-year college degree and they had worked in their current jobs for an average of 5.24 years ( $SD = 6.02$  years). Based on Department of Labor (DOL) classifications, 14% of respondents reported working in business or financial operations and 11% in computer or mathematical operations. The remaining respondents were scattered across a range of DOL occupational categories.

## Measures

**Workplace dignity.** All measures were hosted on Qualtrics. Participants responded to the 61-item workplace dignity pilot scale using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). Respondents also answered several questions about work history and demographics.

**Positively related variables.** We measured the positively-related variables with the 4-item Interpersonal Justice scale (Colquitt, 2001;  $\alpha = .91$ ; 5-point scale); the 6-item Need for Competence scale (Van den Broeck et al., 2010;  $\alpha = .86$ ; 7-point scale); and the 5-item Workplace Status scale (Djurdjevic et al., 2017;  $\alpha = .96$ ; 7-point scale).

**Negatively related variables.** We measured the negatively-related variables with the 7-item Workplace Incivility scale (Cortina et al., 2001;  $\alpha = .93$ ; 4-point scale); the 10-item Workplace Objectification scale (Gruenfeld et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .84$ ; 7-point scale); and the 5-item Work Alienation scale (Nair & Vohra, 2009;  $\alpha = .94$ ; 7-point scale).

## Results

We analyzed the data in two steps. First, we constructed a good-fitting measurement model of the workplace dignity scale items using exploratory structural equation modeling (E-SEM) and confirmatory factor analytic (CFA) tools in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). E-SEM allows for the freedom of exploratory factor analysis while providing model fit statistics to gauge the progress towards a good-fitting measurement model, which can then be confirmed using CFA methods.

After generating a good-fitting measurement model for the workplace dignity scale, we generated good-fitting measurement models for each of the other six scales in Study 2. Second, we included the measurement models for all variables in a nomological net model to test the strength and direction of the relationships between dignity and the hypothesized related factors. See Figure 1.

**Workplace dignity measurement model.** We proceeded iteratively with our E-SEM efforts by running a series of models that each extracted an increasing number of factors from the workplace dignity items, starting with one extracted factor in the first model. As we proceeded, we followed modern recommendations for factor analysis (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016) and focused on strength of factor loadings, presence of cross-loaded items, improvements in model fit offered by the addition of a factor (as indicated by CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and Modification Indices), model parsimony, and theoretical support for the model.

Our E-SEM process yielded a six-factor model, indicated by 18 items. Five of the factors clustered according to the themes of dignity we identified in Study 1: respectful interaction, recognition of competence and contribution, equality, inherent value, and general feelings of workplace dignity. All items for these factors were positively-valenced. After eliminating items with secondary loadings, we retained items that yielded the strongest loadings and which adequately represented their respective factors. The remaining factor consisted of negatively-valenced items, which we labeled “workplace indignity.” We isolated a representative grouping of the four most effective (according to factor loadings) items for this factor. See Table 1 for items and factor loadings.

Because of the strong relationships between the five factors of dignity, and the previous qualitative finding that workplace dignity is composed of multiple dimensions (Lucas, 2015), we tested a second-order factor model. In this model, a higher-order workplace dignity factor was reflected by five factors of workplace dignity and their respective indicators (Rindskopf & Rose, 1988). This model, Model 1a, fit the data well, according to the CFA:  $\chi^2(128) = 392.97$ , CFI = .955, TLI = .946, RMSEA = .072 [.064, .080]. We then compared Model 1a to alternative, simpler measurement models. Our comparisons of these models specifically focused on indicators of global fit (i.e., CFI, TLI, RMSEA) and more local model fit indicators (i.e., Modification Indices). Model 1b included only one factor of workplace dignity reflected by all 18 items of the WDS; it fit the data relatively worse than Model 1a:  $\chi^2(134) = 1326.80$ , CFI = .798, TLI = .769, RMSEA = .149 [.142, .156]. Model 1c included a single factor of workplace dignity reflected by 14 items and a covarying workplace indignity factor reflected by 4 items. It also fit the data relatively worse than Model 1a:  $\chi^2(133) = 702.62$ , CFI = .904, TLI = .889, RMSEA = .103 [.096, .111]. Therefore, we retained Model 1a for further testing. See Table 2 for global model fit indices for all WDS measurement models.

**Measurement models for nomological variables.** All scales except the objectification scale yielded a single-factor measurement model that fit the data well. Workplace

objectification yielded a two-factor model, composed of factors we labeled “Objectified” (i.e., feelings of being valued only for one’s function at work) and “Humanized” (i.e., feelings of being valued for one’s personal attributes and relational value). Data for the Humanized factor items were reverse coded to align with the direction of the Objectified factor (i.e., higher scores indicate greater objectification). Additionally, in each of the incivility, alienation, and competence models, we added one correlated measurement error parameter based on common wording and support from modification indices.

**Nomological net model.** Given the good-fitting measurement models for the focal workplace dignity variable and the nomological network variables, we then examined the relationships between factors. Figure 1 displays the nomological net model with observed relationships between dignity, indignity, and hypothesized convergent and discriminant variables. Table 3 displays all correlations between latent factors, as well as demographic indicators, which we included for their theoretical relevance to variables of interest. All of our hypotheses were supported, such that workplace dignity yielded significant positive relationships with interpersonal justice (H1a:  $r = .77$ , 95 % CI [.75, .80]), workplace competence (H1b:  $r = .61$ , 95 % CI [.58, .65]), and status (H1c:  $r = .49$ , 95 % CI [.45, .53]). It also yielded significant negative relationships with incivility (H2a:  $r = -.63$ , 95 % CI [-.59, -.66]), objectification (H2b:  $r = -.50$ , 95 % CI [-.45, -.55];  $r = -.54$ , 95 % CI [-.50, -.58]), and alienation (H2c:  $r = -.64$ , 95 % CI [-.61, -.67]). Moreover, this pattern of relationships was reversed for the workplace indignity factor.

**Common method bias test results.** Because we gathered cross-sectional data, using self-report methods, we conducted tests to evaluate the effects of common method bias (CMB). First, we used Harmon’s single factor test, in which all observed variables from Model 8 were included in an exploratory factor analysis, using direct oblimin rotation and principal axis factoring extraction, which specified only one extracted factor. If the single factor accounts for a majority (>50%) of the variance, then this test indicates the presence of CMB. The results indicated the single factor did not explain a majority of the variance (40%). We also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis, using Mplus, in which all observed variables from Model 8 were regressed onto a single latent factor. If the data fit this model well, the results would suggest evidence of CMB. This CFA did not reveal any evidence of CMB, such that the single-factor model did not fit the data well,  $\chi^2(2015) = 12540.88$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .528, TLI = .513, RMSEA = .114 [.112, .116].

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 support the construct validity of the WDS. The measurement model is based on the theorized model of workplace dignity’s components, fits the data well, and yields relationships with theoretically relevant constructs in predicted directions. Although the higher-order dignity factor relates strongly to interpersonal justice, dignity and interpersonal justice each yield a different pattern of relationships with other organizational (e.g., workplace status) and demographic variables, indicating divergence with nomological net variables. Moreover, the variance explained in WDS items meet Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion for discriminant validity, average variance explained (AVE = .72,  $r^2_{\text{dignity-justice}} = .59$ ). We recognize that SEM-based analysis of correlations typically yields amplified relationships (cf. use of observed scale means); however, we used SEM because of its elegance in model testing and the ease of transitioning from measurement model testing to covariance model testing. We conducted a third study to examine the predictive relationships of suggested antecedents and outcomes of workplace dignity.

### Study 3: Model Replication and Criterion Validity

Our goal for Study 3 was to establish evidence of the WDS's criterion-related validity by examining its relationship with a number of workplace variables. As a first step, we identified key variables for testing. Although criterion-related validity conventionally focuses on outcomes predicted by a scale, many researchers have positioned workplace dignity as an outcome itself. Therefore, we identified three variables that should predict workplace dignity and three variables that should be predicted by workplace dignity. Regarding the former, a number of authors have claimed that status-based variables can strongly influence an employee's experiences of workplace dignity. The workplace predictors we included in our analysis were dirty work, organizational rank, and income insufficiency.

First, based on the number of workplace dignity studies examining dirty work—those jobs that tend to be viewed as disgusting or degrading (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999)—it appears that the stigma of tainted work has profound effects on the ability of individuals to experience a full sense of dignity at work. This includes a full range of *physically* dirty work (e.g., garbage collectors, Hamilton et al., 2017), *morally* dirty work (e.g., abortion nurses, Chiappetta-Swanson, 2005), and *socially* dirty work (e.g., hospitality workers at a hotel with an escort service, Otis, 2008). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 3a. Dirty work will negatively predict scores on a valid scale of workplace dignity.*

Second, hierarchy may influence the experience of dignity, especially in regard to where an individual is positioned within that hierarchy. Hierarchy is defined as an “implicit or explicit rank order of individuals or groups with respect to their relative possession of a valued social dimension” (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 354). In organizations, hierarchies may be formalized through organizational charts and chains of command that reify lines of authority. But hierarchy is more than just an organizing structure. Hinrichs and Hinrichs (2014, p. 94) explain that hierarchy “may communicate to members that certain individuals have greater worth” and, consequently, that lower-ranking employees' dignity may be eroded as a result. Kennedy et al. (2016) argue that dignity is impacted by hierarchy because the de facto authority built into hierarchy removes individuals' ability to act for reasons they endorse and demands their compliance. Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 3b. Organizational rank will positively predict scores on a valid scale of workplace dignity.*

Third, the income generated from work also plays an important role in the achievement of workplace dignity. Bolton (2007) positions “just reward” as a necessary precursor to dignity at work. Earning low wages is linked to a host of negative outcomes, including reductions in cognitive functioning, happiness, physical well-being, and job performance (Leana & Meuris, 2015). If individuals do not earn enough from their work to make ends meet, their self-worth may be called into question by themselves and others, as income and money can serve as an intrapersonal, internal (organizational), and external (societal) marker of worthiness (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2013). Low wages may also compound dignity by signaling low value and inciting capricious treatment by managers (Cleaveland, 2005). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 3c. Income insufficiency will negatively predict scores on a valid scale of workplace dignity.*

Next, we tested the ability of dignity to explain variance in workplace outcomes, above and beyond similar variables. By demonstrating incremental variance when controlling for overlapping constructs, we can establish the criterion-related validity of the WDS. To that end, we included two simultaneous covariates of workplace dignity. The first covariate is organizational respect, which focuses on the giving of respect in organizations. It is defined as “the showing of esteem, dignity, and care for another person’s positive self-regard” (Ramarajan et al., 2008, p. 5). The second covariate is meaningful work, which refers to work that encompasses “individuals’ dreams, hopes, and sense of fulfillment and contribution” (Cheney et al., 2008, p. 140), and which therefore affirms their sense of positive self-worth (Buzzanell & Lucas, 2013). Combined, these covariates encompass both the potential dignity embedded in the social environment of the workplace and in the actual work itself (Bolton, 2007).

The workplace outcomes we included in our analysis reflect variables for which extant research demonstrates that organizational respect and meaningful work have predictive power, and for which qualitative studies suggest workplace dignity also should be a strong predictor. These include employee engagement, burnout, and turnover intentions.

Employee engagement is a positive psychological state in which employees’ energy is directed toward desired organizational outcomes (Parker & Griffin, 2011; Shuck et al., 2014). It has been predicted by respect or lack thereof (Giumetti et al., 2013) and meaningful work (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Additionally, numerous studies have shown that dignity violations have reduced employee engagement (Fleming, 2005; Karlsson, 2012; Lucas et al., 2017). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 4a: Workplace dignity will positively predict employee engagement, above and beyond meaningful work and organizational respect.*

Burnout is defined as a “psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). Research shows that lack of organizational respect (Ramarajan et al., 2008) can be a contributing factor to burnout. In contrast, increasing the meaningfulness of work can prevent burnout by offsetting the negative effect of chronic stressors (Shanafelt, 2009). Dignity, too, is connected to burnout. In fact, Maslach and Leiter explain that burnout “represents an erosion in values, *dignity*, spirit, and will—an erosion of the human soul” (1997, p. 17; emphasis added). Research on dignity shows that when dignity is present in workplaces, employees are able to persist through burnout (Stacey, 2005). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 4b: Workplace dignity will negatively predict employee burnout, above and beyond meaningful work and organizational respect.*

Turnover intention, which is an indicator of employees’ plans to leave their jobs, is a variable that is salient to organizations because of the high costs of turnover. Research has shown that disrespect can incite turnover intentions (Houshmand et al., 2012) and meaningful work can help people stay in jobs despite other kinds of difficulties (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). In dignity studies, chronic threats to dignity have motivated people to leave their jobs (Ayers et al., 2008; Baker & Lucas, 2017; Cleaveland, 2005). Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 4c: Workplace dignity will negatively predict employee turnover intentions, above and beyond meaningful work and organizational respect.*

## Sample

We recruited participants according to the same recruitment criteria in Study 2. In total, 600 individuals responded to an MTurk survey in exchange for \$0.60 in compensation. After applying the same filters as Study 2 for inclusion in analysis, we retained 532 responses, for a complete and usable rate of 89%. Respondents' demographics nearly matched those of Study 2. The sample skewed slightly female (53%), participants ranged in age from 21–68 years old ( $M = 35.74$  years,  $SD = 9.84$  years), and there was some racial/ethnic diversity (67% White, 11% Asian, 8% Black, 5% Latino). Again, the majority (64%) reported finishing a 4-year college degree or higher and they reported an average tenure of 6.89 years in their current job ( $SD = 5.42$  years). The most frequently reported job classifications included business and financial occupations (12%), computer and mathematical occupations (12%), and sales/retail occupations (11%).

## Measures

**Workplace dignity.** All participants responded to the 18-item Workplace Dignity Scale using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The internal consistency estimate for this set of items was good ( $\alpha = .96$ ; 95% CI [.96, .97]). Participants also responded to items assessing demographic information.

**Antecedent variables.** To measure dirty work, we adapted Ashforth and Kreiner's (1999) definitions of dirty work into a 7-item scale of dirty work using a 7-point Likert-type frequency response scale (1 = Never to 7 = Multiple times every day). The internal consistency estimate for this set of items was good ( $\alpha = .84$ , 95% CI [.82, .84]). To measure income insufficiency, respondents answered an item about their discomfort living on their income (e.g., "In the city where I live, it is hard to get by on my income"). To measure organizational rank, respondents used a 9-point sliding scale to indicate their status in the organizational hierarchy, with 9 being the highest possible rank (e.g., CEO) and 1 being the lowest possible rank (e.g., entry-level employee).

**Covariates.** We measured organizational respect with the 6-item Organizational Respect scale (Ramarajan et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .89$ ). A sample item is, "Differences in backgrounds among employees are valued in this organization." We measured meaningful work with the 5-item Meaningfulness at Work scale (May et al., 2004;  $\alpha = .90$ ). A sample item is, "My job activities are personally meaningful to me." Each scale uses an appropriately worded Likert-type response scale.

**Outcome variables.** To measure work engagement, we used the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006;  $\alpha = .89$ ). To measure burnout, we used the 4-item Workplace Burnout scale (Ramarajan et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .78$ ). To measure turnover intentions, we used the 3-item Turnover Intentions scale (Wilson & Holmvall, 2013;  $\alpha = .87$ ). Each of these scales requires participants to indicate on a Likert-type scale how frequently they experience a thought or sentiment at work.

## Results

Our analysis proceeded in a three-step process. First, we constructed good-fitting measurement models for each scale, including a replication of the dignity measurement model from Study 2. Next, we tested Hypotheses 3a-3c in a structural model regressing dignity and its covariates onto the hypothesized predictors (Model 14). Finally, we regressed the workplace outcomes onto dignity and covariates in a second structural model (Model 15). In order to isolate the variance explained by dignity, above and beyond the covariates, we also tested a

model without the dignity variables to obtain  $R^2$  estimates for the outcome variables for comparison (Model 16). We separated the tests of dignity's predictors (i.e., Model 14) and outcomes (i.e., Model 15) for the sake of model parsimony and clarity. The addition of nonessential complexity in a structural SEM model, like the covariances between dignity's antecedents and outcomes, weakens model fit and creates unnecessary noise in the model's paths. To the extent possible, parsimony in model construction is preferred over complexity (Kline, 2016). Moreover, a single model with workplace dignity's covariates, antecedents, and outcomes, would produce results that could suggest relationships irrelevant to our hypotheses (e.g., a possible mediated path from the predicted antecedents of dignity to its predicted outcomes), which also were not the focus of these tests.

**Measurement models.** In order to test whether we could replicate the measurement model developed in Study 2, we used E-SEM to test the factor loadings and structure of the workplace dignity items. Item groupings, based on factor loadings, were identical to the model from Study 2. Additionally, a CFA indicated the measurement model fit the data equally well:  $\chi^2(128) = 493.01, p < .001, CFI = .958, TLI = .951, RMSEA = .073 [.066, .080]$ .

For antecedent variables, we found support for a good-fitting, 3-factor measurement model (Model 10) that closely resembled the three types of dirty work outlined by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999). For the income insufficiency and organizational rank items, we used the observed scores. For the covariates, we developed a good-fitting measurement model for organizational respect (Model 11) and meaningful work (Model 12). Because engagement and burnout are commonly measured and modeled together (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), and because turnover intentions were measured with only three items that yielded a just-identified (i.e., artificially perfect-fitting) measurement model, we developed a good-fitting measurement model including all outcome factors (i.e., engagement, burnout, and turnover intentions; Model 13). Table 4 lists the model fit statistics for each measurement model and the subsequent structural models. Table 5 presents correlations between variables of interest.

**Structural models.** Figure 2 displays both structural models. Our first structural model (Model 14), in which dignity and its covariates were regressed onto the predictors, fit the data marginally well:  $\chi^2(640) = 1623.52, p < .001, CFI = .941, TLI = .935, RMSEA = .054 [.051, .057]$ . More importantly, our hypotheses were largely supported. Dirty work, organizational rank, and income insufficiency all explained a significant amount of variance in workplace dignity or indignity. In the second structural model (Model 15), the outcomes engagement, burnout, and turnover intentions were regressed onto dignity, indignity, meaningful work, and organizational respect. This model also fit the data marginally well:  $\chi^2(1087) = 2995.871, p < .001, CFI = .920, TLI = .914, RMSEA = .057 [.055, .060]$ . See Table 4 for a summary.

**Hypothesis testing.** Workplace dignity explained a significant amount of variance in important outcomes above and beyond other workplace variables. After controlling for demographic variables, dignity accounted for a significant amount of variance in engagement (H4a:  $\beta = .16, 95\% \text{ CI } [.09, .23]$ ), while indignity accounted for a significant amount of variance in burnout (H4b:  $\beta = .50, 95\% \text{ CI } [.44, .56]$ ) and turnover intentions (H4c:  $\beta = .35, 95\% \text{ CI } [.29, .41]$ ). Moreover, this model yielded strong, significant effect sizes in outcome variables: engagement  $R^2 = .73, 95\% \text{ CI } [.70, .75]$ ; burnout  $R^2 = .45, 95\% \text{ CI } [.41, .49]$ ; and turnover intentions  $R^2 = .42, 95\% \text{ CI } [.38, .45]$ . The comparison structural model, without the dignity variables, yielded relatively smaller effect sizes: engagement  $R^2 = .72, 95\% \text{ CI } [.70, .75]$ ; burnout  $R^2 = .30, 95\% \text{ CI } [.26, .33]$ ; and turnover intentions  $R^2 = .33, 95\% \text{ CI } [.30, .37]$ . These results indicate that workplace dignity explains meaningful variance in engagement, burnout, and

turnover intentions above and beyond the predictive effects of meaningful work and organizational respect.

**Common method bias test results.** We conducted two tests to evaluate the presence of CMB in both structural models. The results of Harmon's single factor test, using direct oblimin rotation and principal axis factoring extraction, revealed a single factor did not explain a majority of the variance in either Model 14 (40%) or Model 15 (45%). We also conducted a CFA using Mplus to test for CMB in Models 14 and 15, such that each CFA included one latent factor and all observed variables were entered as indicators. These CFA tests did not reveal any evidence of CMB, such that the single-factor model did not fit the data well for Model 14,  $\chi^2(779) = 7736.36, p < .001, CFI = .591, TLI = .570, RMSEA = .130 [.127, .132]$  or Model 15  $\chi^2(1127) = 12085.27, p < .001, CFI = .545, TLI = .525, RMSEA = .135 [.133, .137]$ .

## Discussion

In Study 3, we replicated the measurement model developed in Study 2. Tests of structural models that positioned dignity as both an outcome and as a predictor offered additional support for the WDS. Model 15, which positioned dignity as an outcome, showed that several status-related variables all explained a significant amount of variance in workplace dignity and indignity in predicted directions. Model 16, which positioned dignity as a predictor, demonstrated that dignity and indignity offer unique, incremental validity in explaining workplace variables. Though we recognize its ability to amplify relationships by accounting for unreliability in measures (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016), we used SEM for its ability to test a single model including multiple criteria and predictors. Because we did not hypothesize the complete version of either structural model, we acknowledge the less-than-ideal model fit. But simplifying each model and removing irrelevant and unsupported paths would greatly improve model fit (and modification indices support this assertion). From a validation standpoint, this study provides the final piece of evidence—criterion-related validity—necessary to support the use of a newly developed scale (DeVellis, 2016).

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to construct a scale to measure workplace dignity. Through three studies, we inductively identified initial conceptual factors and items, established the internal consistency of the scale, and supported and replicated a good-fitting measurement model that aligns with conceptual foundations. The resulting 18-item WDS captures five positively-valenced factors of dignity (respectful interaction, competence and contribution, equality, inherent value, and general dignity perceptions) and a sixth negatively-valenced factor of workplace indignity. We demonstrated convergent validity of the WDS with workplace dignity and indignity factors yielding significant correlations with workplace variables of interpersonal justice, competence, and status. Then we showed that workplace dignity and indignity were predicted by a range of theorized variables including dirty work, organizational rank, and income insufficiency. Finally, we demonstrated incremental validity with dignity predicting employee engagement, and indignity predicting burnout and turnover intentions, above and beyond the effects of meaningful work and organizational respect. Cumulatively, these studies provide evidence of the psychometric soundness and utility of the WDS.



## Contributions

The most significant contribution of this research is that we developed the first psychometrically sound measure of workplace dignity. Whereas workplace dignity researchers previously had to resort to drawing claims about dignity based on conceptually related variables and/or measuring dignity through proxies represented by various combinations of work variables, the WDS now provides a much-needed tool for directly measuring workplace dignity. With it, researchers and practitioners will be able to expand empirical knowledge about workplace dignity—especially with regard to the direction and strength of relationships to other salient workplace variables.

For instance, researchers can use the WDS to examine the impact of various influences (e.g., leadership or management style, pay equity, coworker relations, emotional labor demands) on employees' perceptions of dignity. They may use the WDS as a diagnostic tool to assess the dignity perceptions of vulnerable populations (e.g., temp workers, LGBT employees) or to determine the effectiveness of dignity interventions (e.g., civility training). They may use it to identify a more robust account of antecedents (e.g., safe working conditions, training and development opportunities) and consequences (e.g., creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors) of working with or without dignity. They may use it to explore the extent to which workplace dignity is relevant in other cultures. Ultimately, these empirical insights such as these can begin to make significant contributions to building our theoretical knowledge of workplace dignity.

Toward that end, our findings make key contributions to understanding workplace dignity. First, our findings show that workplace dignity (inclusive of both dignity and indignity factors) is a critical organizational construct in that it is a cause *and* a consequence of important organizational phenomena. Positioned as a cause, positive experiences of dignity predict higher levels of engagement; negative experiences of indignity predict burnout and turnover intentions above and beyond variance driven by organizational respect and meaningful work. Positioned as a consequence, workplace dignity and indignity are predicted by factors including dirty work and income insufficiency. In addition to empirically validating that there are connections between dignity and its theorized antecedents and outcomes, this broad-based net of influence underscores that dignity plays a pivotal role in employees' organizational experiences. Therefore, in addition to researchers specifically interested in workplace dignity, other researchers broadly interested in humanistic management, positive organizational scholarship, civility, employee engagement, organizational performance, stigmatized work, and inequality should find this scale useful as well.

Second, our findings provide preliminary empirical support that workplace dignity does indeed operate in a dual-factor or dual-continuum manner (cf. Herzberg, 1968/2003). Unlike many phenomena that operate along a single continuum (i.e., where an individual, or other unit of analysis, falls somewhere between high or low on a particular measure), dignity operates simultaneously on a positive continuum of dignity and a negative continuum of indignity. These two factors are related, but do operate somewhat independently. We demonstrated in Study 2 and Study 3 that rather than just similar magnitudes of relationships with opposite signs, workplace indignity and dignity correlated with, were predicted, or explained variance in other variables with differing strengths of relationships. For instance, strong, positive relationships existed between workplace dignity and workplace status, and between dignity and organizational rank. But neither status nor rank yielded a significant relationship with *indignity*. This finding supports a central theoretical claim of humanistic management that to

fully experience dignity, dignity must be both protected from injury and promoted to elevate flourishing (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015; Pirson, 2017).

Third, our scale makes important practical contributions for leaders and managers seeking to improve the dignity of their employees. The WDS is a relatively simple tool for evaluating employees' perceptions of workplace dignity, as well as quality of worklife more generally. In fact, although we used SEM and included all 18 items of the WDS in our analyses, additional testing (i.e., conducting predictive and criterion-related hierarchical regression tests using non-SEM techniques) indicated that researchers and practitioners could use OLS regression to analyze observed scale scores, as well as use selected factors from the WDS (e.g., the three items for respectful interaction). The WDS could be used to assess baseline measures of workplace dignity that can be used as part of regular organizational climate assessments, as well as to understand the levels of dignity experienced by individuals within the organization. Additionally, the WDS could be used to evaluate managerial performance. Subordinates' reports of their workplace dignity may provide a valuable assessment of their respective managers' effectiveness and people-management skills, with a pattern of lower dignity scores signaling potential problems and offering direction for managerial development according to the specific dignity deficits reported by employees. For example, a manager whose team reports low levels of recognition of competence and contribution could be coached on how to express appreciation in authentic ways.

This research also suggests preliminary guidance for building specific interventions for creating more dignity at work. For instance, respectful interaction could be improved by setting tone from the top with leaders modeling respectful communication; publicly communicating civility and respect as core values on the company website and signage; and creating reporting systems for abuses; and, of course, then following through on those reports to resolve problems. Competence and contribution can be built through providing training and professional development opportunities to build employee competence, offering special recognition awards for individuals who perform above and beyond expectations, and creating peer recognition programs. In more tailored applications, the WDS may be used to reveal insights as to how employees perceive individual components of their dignity at work. For instance, some employees may experience dignity (or specifically threats to dignity) due to not feeling appreciated for their competence and contributions; whereas others may experience dignity threats due to feeling that they are not valued as equals. Insights such as these could help managers better understand how employees perceive individual components of their dignity at work and develop responses targeted to individuals.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As with all research, there were some limitations to our studies. First, there were some issues with sampling that limit the generalizability of the WDS. To begin, we intentionally constrained our data collection to U.S. workers to minimize the effect of cultural differences adding unsystematic variance in participants' responses. Consequently, we cannot claim universal applicability of the WDS. Additionally, our sample was not representative of the broad spectrum of the U.S. working population. Whereas MTurk has received support from organizational scholars for the diversity of its participant pools (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2015), because recruitment occurs wholly online, we ultimately sampled an overrepresentation of people working in white-collar or knowledge-based occupations and an underrepresentation of individuals who may not regularly work with computers (e.g., blue-collar workers, food service employees). Therefore, it is possible that

there may be some issues of generalizability when using the WDS for people doing different kinds of work. Future research can accommodate for these limitations by conducting cross-cultural tests of the WDS and sampling broader and more diverse populations.

Second, we relied exclusively on self-report measures in our surveys, which raises the possibility of common method bias (CMB). As described previously, we took several precautions to mitigate CMB. We also ran and reported multiple tests to rule out the possibility of a common methods factor explaining a majority of variance in our statistical tests (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Despite these efforts and a lack of evidence of CMB in our analyses, we acknowledge that our exclusive reliance on self-report measures is still a limitation of the research. Because workplace dignity is a self-construal, it must be measured by self-report. However, future research can address CMB limitations by including other sources of measurement, especially in the case of examining antecedents and outcomes.

Third, our models were incomplete in that they did not include every construct that is theorized to be related to dignity. While we collected data on several positively- and negatively-correlated organizational behavior constructs, theorized predictors and outcomes, and salient covariates, some key constructs of interest were not included. One such construct is organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), which is an attitude of approval or disapproval of the self, indicating the extent to which individuals regard themselves as capable or worthy within an organizational context (Pierce et al., 1989). Although we recognize similarities between OBSE and workplace dignity, there are important differences that distinguish the two. First, OBSE deals with self-perception of worthiness, whereas dignity deals with both self-recognized and other-recognized worth. That means someone could have high self-regard, but still be denied dignity due to others not acting in ways that signal recognition of that worth. As such, many items in the WDS (e.g., “People at work communicate with me respectfully”) invoke relationships with others; whereas, the items in the OBSE reflect an overall evaluation of the self in relation to the organization (e.g., “I am important around here”). Second, OBSE exists on a single continuum, with low and high levels (Gray-Little, Williams, & Hancock, 1997). However, as we described above, workplace dignity involves dignity and indignity as related, but independently-operating factors. Therefore, the opposite of low indignity does not necessarily equate to high dignity and vice versa (cf. Herzberg, 1968/2003). Future research is needed to examine the relationship between workplace dignity and OBSE, as well as numerous other important organizational constructs.

Given that research on workplace dignity has been hampered by the absence of a valid scale, we aimed to develop a measure that could be used to advance knowledge of this important facet of organizational life. While we achieved our goal, we note that this series of studies initiates, rather than concludes, an important line of scholarly inquiry. Indeed, we hope future researchers will continue to test the WDS to uncover more about the properties of the scale, as well as the usefulness of workplace dignity as a construct for understanding employee experiences at work.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the WDS provides a measure of an important workplace variable, justifies interventions to improve dignity through the empirical support for dignity’s relationships to important workplace variables, and establishes themes of dignity and language for organizational stakeholders to discuss its presence and impacts. By developing a single, concise scale to measure experiences of dignity and indignity at work, we hope to advance relevant

research and theory on workplace dignity, its antecedents, and its consequences. Moreover, we hope that this research will ultimately contribute in meaningful ways to improving the working lives of employees.

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**FIGURE 1**  
**Study 2: Nomological Net with Standardized Covariances**

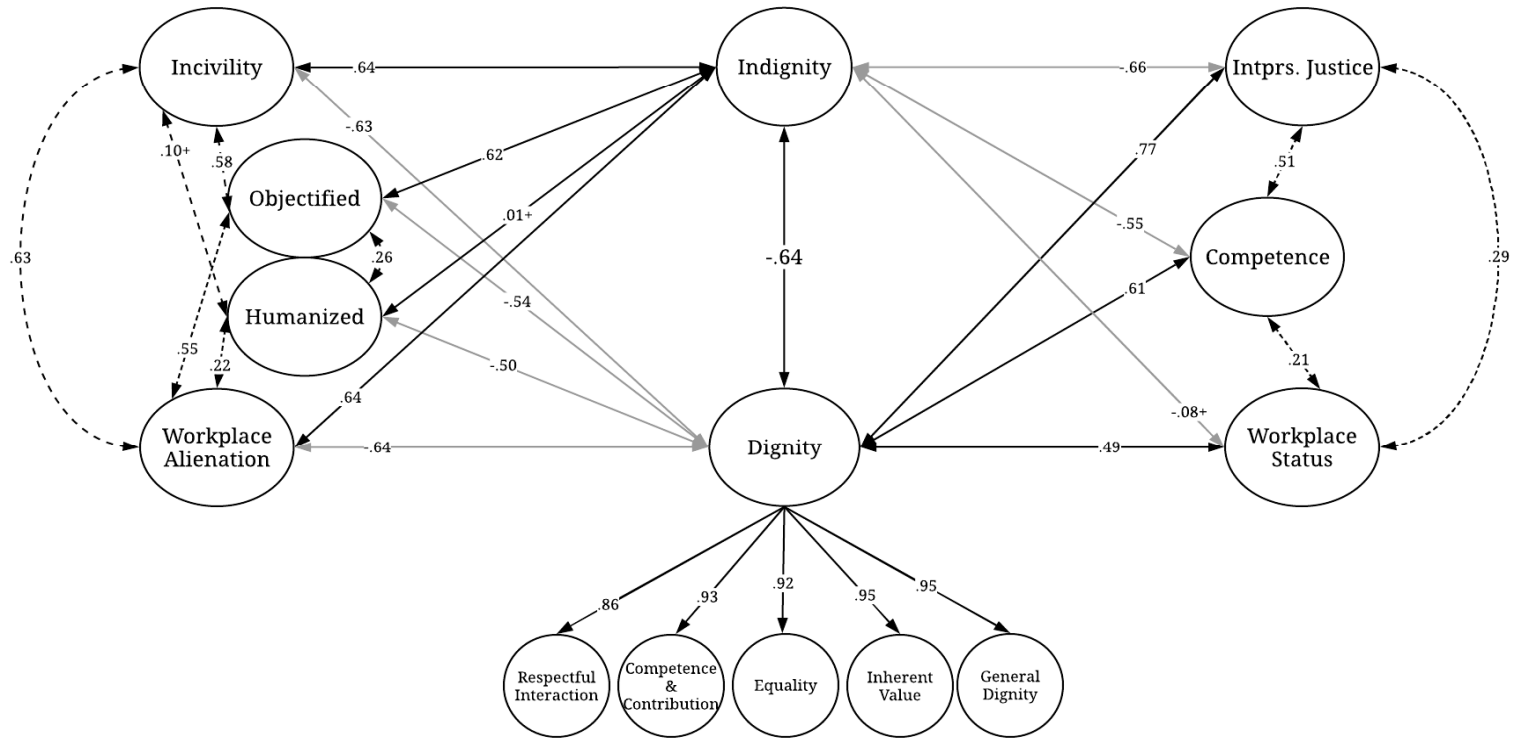
N=401  
 Chi. Sq. (1250) = 2604.66\*\*\*\*  
 CFI= .923; TLI= .916  
 RMSEA= .052 [.049, .055]

All covariances Standardized  
 All relationships significant at  $p < .001$ , unless  
 indicated by +  $p > .05$

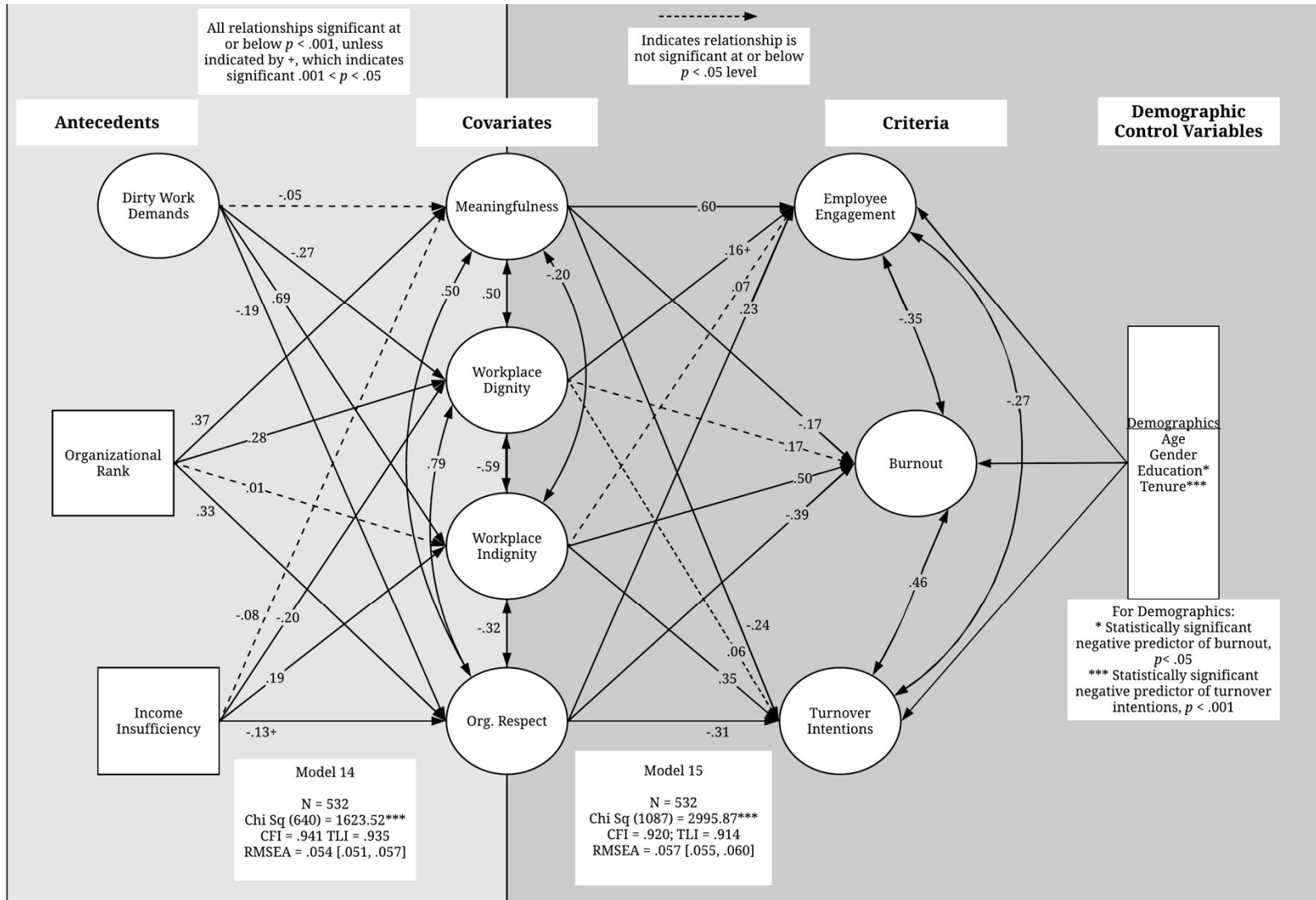
Gray Lines Indicate Predicted Negative Relationships  
 Black Lines Indicate Predicted Positive Relationships

—————> Focal Relationship For  
 Nomological Net Tests

- - - - -> Ancillary Relationship For  
 Nomological Net Tests



**FIGURE 2**  
**Study 3: Structural Models of Observed Antecedents and Outcomes of Workplace Dignity**



**TABLE 1**  
**Study 2: Standardized Factor Loadings for Workplace Dignity Scale Items**

Item	Dignity Factor					
	Respectful Interaction	Competence- Contribution	Equality	Inherent Value	General Dignity	Indignity
	1	2	3	4	5	6
People at work communicate with me respectfully	.863					
I feel respected when I interact with people at work	.916					
I am treated with respect at work	.794					
At work I have the chance to build my competence		.804				
People at work recognize my competence		.760				
People show they appreciate my work efforts		.795				
At work, people talk to me like an equal, even if there are status differences between us			.789			
I feel just as valued as others in the organization			.874			
At work, I am valued as a human being				.825		
People at work treat me like I matter as a person, not just as a worker				.778		
People at work genuinely value me as a person				.811		
My workplace is a source of dignity for me					.836	
I am treated with dignity at work					.905	
I have dignity at work					.829	
People at work treat me like a second-class citizen						.795
I am treated as less valuable than objects or pieces of equipment						.797
My dignity suffers at work						.907
I am treated in undignifying ways at work						.935

Note:  $N = 401$ .

All factor loadings significant,  $p < .001$

**TABLE 2**  
**Study 2: Model Fit Statistics for Measurement and Nomological Net Models**

<b>Measurement Models</b>	$\chi^2$	<b>df</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA [90% CI]</b>
Model 1a: Second-level, five-factor dignity and indignity	392.37**	128	.955	.946	.072 [.064, .080]
Model 1b: Single dignity factor reflected by all dignity items	1326.80***	134	.798	.769	.149 [.142, .156]
Model 1c: Single dignity factor and indignity	702.62***	133	.904	.889	.079 [.096, .111]
Model 2: Interpersonal Justice	0.62	2	1.00	1.00	.000 [.000, .070]
Model 3: Workplace Competence	25.93***	8	.986	.974	.075 [.044, .108]
Model 4: Workplace Status	1.76	2	1.00	1.00	.000 [.000, .095]
Model 5: Workplace Incivility	21.73*	12	.995	.992	.045 [.009, .075]
Model 6: Workplace Objectification	11.57	8	.996	.992	.033 [.000, .072]
Model 7: Workplace Alienation	23.34***	4	.990	.974	.110 [.069, .155]
<b>Nomological Net Model</b>	$\chi^2$	<b>df</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA [90% CI]</b>
Model 8: All Relationships Modeled	2604.66***	1250	.923	.916	.052 [.049, .055]

Note: N= 401. \*p < .01 \*\*p < .05 \*\*\*p < .001

**TABLE 3**  
**Study 2: Correlations between Latent Factors and Observed Demographic Variables in Nomological Network Model**

Variable	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Dignity	.96											
2. Indignity	.88	-.64***										
3. Interpersonal Justice	.91	.77***	-.66***									
4. Workplace Competence	.86	.61***	-.55***	.51***								
5. Workplace Status	.95	.49***	-.08	.29***	.21***							
6. Incivility	.93	-.63***	.64***	-.57***	-.45***	-.20***						
7. Objectified Factor	.84	-.54***	.62***	-.52***	-.32***	-.23***	.58***					
8. Humanized Factor	.72	-.50***	.01	-.32***	-.19**	-.40***	.10	.26***				
9. Workplace Alienation	.94	-.64***	.64***	-.51***	-.42***	-.38***	.63***	.55***	.22***			
10. Age	-	.10	-.20***	.12*	.27***	-.02	-.23***	-.14**	.10	-.18***		
11. Income	-	.14**	-.17***	.17***	.09	.09	-.22***	-.11*	-.01	-.17***	.14**	
12. Tenure	-	.02	-.04	.05	-.04	-.07	-.02	.01	-.05	.01	-.23***	-.11

Note: N= 401. \*p < .01 \*\*p < .05 \*\*\*p < .001

**TABLE 4**  
**Study 3: Model Fit Statistics for Measurement and Structural Models**

<b>Measurement Models</b>	$\chi^2$	<b>df</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA [90% CI]</b>
Model 9: Workplace Dignity & Indignity	493.01**	128	.958	.951	.073 [.066, .080]
Model 10: Dirty Work	26.33**	11	.989	.978	.051 [.026, .077]
Model 11: Organizational Respect	75.40***	9	.960	.934	.118 [.094, .143]
Model 12: Meaningful Work	35.78***	5	.990	.981	.108 [.076, .142]
Model 13: Outcome Factors	442.79***	97	.956	.945	.082 [.074, .090]
<b>Structural Models</b>	$\chi^2$	<b>df</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA [90% CI]</b>
Model 14: Dignity as an Outcome	1623.52***	640	.941	.935	.054 [.051, .057]
Model 15: Dignity as Predictor	2995.87***	1087	.920	.914	.057 [.055, .060]

*Note:*  $N = 532$ . \* $p < .01$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .001$



**TABLE 5**  
**Study 3: Correlations between Latent Factors and Observed Variables**

Variable	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Dignity	.96													
2. Indignity	.88	-.59***												
3. Dirty Work	.84	-.28***	.74***											
4. Organizational Rank	N/A	.26***	.08	.17***										
5. Income Insufficiency	N/A	-.29***	.34***	.29***	-.10*									
6. Meaningfulness	.96	.54***	-.15***	.00	.38***	-.12**								
7. Organizational Respect	.89	.83***	-.35***	-.17***	.33***	-.20***	.57***							
8. Engagement	.95	.63***	-.18***	.08	.39***	-.14***	.81***	.68***						
9. Burnout	.94	-.53***	.55***	.45***	-.02	.36***	-.36***	-.52***	-.51***					
10. Turnover Intent	.91	-.54***	.46***	.27***	-.18***	.34***	-.44***	-.53***	-.54***	.68***				
11. Age	-	.07	-.25***	-.26***	.08	-.09**	.05	-.04	-.20	-.08	-.11*			
12. Gender	-	-.01	-.15***	-.24***	-.16***	.07	-.01	-.10*	-.06	-.01	.01	.11*		
13. Education	-	.09	.07	.12*	.25***	-.07	.16***	.05	.18***	.06	.01	-.09*	-.10*	
14. Tenure	-	.08	-.08	-.02	.22***	-.07	.10*	.04	.07	-.07	-.19***	.44***	.01	.04

Note:  $N = 532$ . \* $p < .01$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .001$