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More Is Less: Learning But Not Relaxing Buffers Deviance Under Job Stressors

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Workplace deviance harms the well-being of an organization and its members. Unfortunately, theory and prior research suggest that deviance is associated with job stressors, which are endemic to work organizations and often cannot be easily eliminated. To address this conundrum, we explore actions individuals can take at work that serve as buffering conditions for the positive relationship between job stressors and deviant behavior. Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, we examine a resource-building activity (i.e., learning something new at work) and a demand-shielding activity (i.e., taking time for relaxation at work) as potential boundary conditions. In 2 studies with employee samples using complementary designs, we find support for the buffering role of learning but not for relaxation. When employees learn new things at work, the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance is weaker; as is the indirect relationship mediated by negative emotions. Taking time for relaxation at work did not show a moderating role in either study. Therefore, although relaxation is a response that individuals might be inclined to turn to for counteracting work stress, our findings suggest that, when it comes to addressing negative emotions and deviance in stressful work environments, building positive resources by learning something new at work could be more useful. In that way, doing *more* (i.e., learning, and not relaxing) is associated with *less* (deviance) in the face of job stressors.

Keywords: conservation of resources, job stressors, learning, relaxation, workplace deviance

Deviance in the workplace can be costly for both organizations and individuals (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Workplace deviance refers to employees' volitional behavior that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of the organization or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Examples of deviance include taking company property and services for personal use, discussing confidential information with unauthorized people, or acting rudely toward someone at work (Robinson & Bennett, 1995); some deviant behaviors, according to the behavioral ethics literature, may also be considered unethical (Treviño et al., 2006). One reason for employees' deviant behavior at work, according to conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998), is a loss of or threat to one's resources as a result of job stressors. Job stressors are environmental conditions and demands at work that tax individuals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); examples include organizational politics, red tape, and role ambiguity (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Lepine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). Prior empirical studies have shown a positive association between job stressors and deviant behavior in the workplace (e.g., Eschleman, Bowling, & LaHuis, 2015; Meier & Spector, 2013; Penney & Spector, 2005; Zhang, LePine, Buckman, & Wei, 2014), including their linkage through negative emotions (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Matta, Erol-Korkmaz, Johnson, & Biçaksiz, 2014; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Unfortunately, job stressors are endemic to work organizations and often cannot be easily eliminated, leaving their link to workplace deviance a potent problem.

Given the prevalence of job stressors and the undesirable relationship between job stressors and workplace deviance, one important question surfaces: What can organizations and individuals do to buffer the job stressors to deviant behavior relationship? Extant research on deviance suggests some potential buffers, including individuals' dispositions—such as higher conscientiousness and agreeableness (Eschleman et al., 2015) or lower negative affectivity (Penney & Spector, 2005), or supervisors' transactional and transformational leadership (Zhang et al., 2014). However, these boundary conditions suggested by existing research rely on relatively stable individual differences that are not easily malleable in everyday work, or on supervisors' specific leadership styles. Therefore, we lack insights about what actions individuals may take at work or organizations may encourage individuals to take at work, to attenuate the link between job stressors and deviance. Exploring such buffering activities is important, because conceptually, it will bring an action-oriented perspective to considering

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the relationship between job stressors and deviance; practically, it can provide useful guidance for employees who desire to respond to work stressors in better ways and for organizations seeking to address deviance issues.

We draw upon conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998) to examine two types of activities that employees may engage in at work—resource-building activities and demand-shielding activities. Specifically, we examine *learning something new at work*, as a resource-building activity, and *taking time for relaxation at work*, as a demand-shielding activity, as potential buffering conditions for the relationship between job stressors and deviant behavior. Although relaxation is a common response that individuals might be inclined to take when under work stress, as it entails relatively low effort (Trougakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008) and affords temporary relief (Roth & Cohen, 1986; Hunter & Wu, 2016), we expect that learning will also be helpful when it comes to alleviating deviance in the face of job stressors. In addition, building on affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and prior research, we include negative emotions and examine whether learning and relaxation at work may serve as buffering conditions for the stressors-deviance indirect relationship mediated by negative emotions. In examining job stressors, we specifically focus on *hindrance stressors* based on conservation of resources theory and the challenge-hindrance stressors framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Hindrance stressors are stressful factors at work that are generally viewed as thwarting personal growth and goal attainment and thus are threatening (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Examples include politics in the organization, red tape that one has to go through to get work done, ambiguity in roles and expectations, and other types of hassles in the workplace (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lepine et al., 2005).

This research offers several contributions to theory. By integrating conservation of resources theory and affective events theory with the deviance literature, we provide a new perspective for tackling deviance in stressful work environments that focuses on employee activities. Along this line, this research also extends theory in the behavioral ethics literature regarding useful approaches to take in organizational contexts associated with misconduct (Zhang, Gino, & Bazerman, 2014). Furthermore, consistent with recent perspectives on learning (Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014), we highlight an ancillary benefit of learning that extends beyond the knowledge gain—namely, how learning can be linked to attenuated harm of work stressors. We also contribute to research on conservation of resources theory through a parallel examination of resource-building and demand-shielding activities that reflect the core tenets of the theory (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). We present our theoretical model in Figure 1 and test this model in two studies with employee samples using complementary designs.

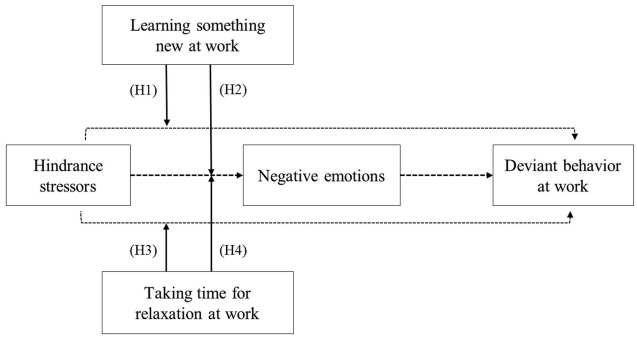

Figure 1. Hypothesized buffering roles of learning and relaxation for the overall and mediated relationships. Solid lines represent the hypothesized moderation effects. Dotted lines represent relationships that are not explicitly hypothesized but are part of the model.

Theory and Hypotheses

Hindrance Stressors and Deviant Behavior at Work

We address the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance based on conservation of resource theory and the challenge-hindrance stressors framework. According to the challenge-hindrance stressors framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), unlike challenge stressors, which are stressful factors viewed by people as challenging but potentially rewarding (e.g., workload, amount of responsibility; Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lepine et al., 2005), hindrance stressors thwart goals and growth and are threatening rather than rewarding (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lepine et al., 2005). Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998) posits that humans seek to obtain and protect resources that are important to them and that stress occurs when resources are threatened or lost. From this perspective, in the face of hindrance stressors individuals will be particularly likely to engage in deviant behavior, because hindrance stressors can consume personal resources but do not build resources toward personal growth and future gains. As a result, individuals may engage in deviant behavior at work in response to their resource loss and threat, as a way to retaliate against the organization (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008), to obtain personal gains and compensate for their losses (Spector & Fox, 2005), or to release and vent their negative feelings (Lee & Allen, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1997). Indeed, prior studies have shown a positive association between various types of hindering job stressors—such as organizational constraints, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflict—and deviant behavior (Eschleman et al., 2015; Fox et al., 2001; Meier & Spector, 2013; Penney & Spector, 2005; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009), and studies that explicitly use the challenge-hindrance stressors framework also show hindrance stressors as a robust correlate of workplace deviance (Rodell & Judge, 2009). In addition, addressing deviance in relation to stressors at work is consistent with an emphasis in the behavioral ethics literature on exploring actionable ways of dealing with misconduct in the presence of detrimental situational forces (Moore & Gino, 2015; Zhang et al., 2014). Despite our focus on hindrance stressors, we control for challenge stressors in the empirical investigation.

We also consider an intervening process—negative emotions—through which hindrance stressors relate to workplace deviance. According to affective events theory, workplace factors generate affective reactions (e.g., negative emotions) depending on their implications for individuals' goals and values (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The presence of hindrance stressors, such as red tape and role ambiguity, can make it difficult for individuals to achieve work and personal goals. Given these negative implications for goals and values, it is natural to expect that hindrance stressors will

be associated with negative emotions. Affective events theory further suggests that, when individuals experience negative emotions, they will be more likely to engage in deviant behavior, which can help compensate for their emotional suffering, bring harm to external parties related to their negative emotions, or simply release and vent the emotions (Lee & Allen, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1997; Spector & Fox, 2005). Taken together, these arguments suggest that negative emotions can mediate the relationship between job stressors and deviance, and prior studies have provided evidence of such mediation (Fox et al., 2001; Matta et al., 2014; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009).

Consistent with approaches in related prior studies (e.g., Christian & Ellis, 2011; Lee & Allen, 2002; Penney & Spector, 2005; Rodell & Judge, 2009), we focus on overall deviance and not on target-specific (i.e., organizational or interpersonal) deviant behavior. Our theoretical rationale does not imply different relationships depending on the target of deviant behavior, and studies also provide evidence that job stressors have similar relationships with organizational and interpersonal deviance (e.g., Fox et al., 2001; Matta et al., 2014; Meier & Spector, 2013).

Learning and Relaxation at Work and Their Potential Buffering Roles

Drawing upon conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998), we propose that *resource-building activities* and *demand-shielding activities* at work can potentially serve as buffering conditions for the relationship between hindrance stressors and workplace deviance. Conservation of resources theory suggests that workplace activities that help individuals gain new resources or prevent loss of resources can serve to counteract stress (Halbesleben et al., 2014). For example, the work recovery literature theorizes that, when individuals have been taxed by work demands, actively constructing positive resources (i.e., resource building) and temporarily suspending stressful demands to prevent further resource loss (i.e., demand shielding) can both have restorative functions (Sonnentag, Niessen, & Neff, 2012). In the present research, we specifically examine *learning something new at work*, as a resource-building activity, and *taking time for relaxation at work*, as a demand-shielding activity. Learning and relaxation outside of work have been suggested by the work recovery literature to provide recuperation (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007), and some emerging evidence suggests that learning and relaxation at work are associated with more vitality and less fatigue (Fritz, Lam, & Spreitzer, 2011; Trougakos, Hideg, Cheng, & Beal, 2014). By investigating learning and relaxation at work in tandem, we can better understand their implications in times of stress.

Learning as a buffering factor. Employees can learn something new at work in various ways (Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Noe et al., 2014). For example, they may read online and print materials to obtain new information, observe colleagues to pick up new skills, or seek out intellectual challenges in work tasks (Doornbos, Simons, & Denessen, 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Learning new things at work may also occur out of personal interests instead of work needs, such as picking up a second language through social interactions at work, or learning about tools that are useful for one's life and work.

Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, we propose that, when individuals learn new things at work, the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior will be weaker, because learning can construct positive resources and counteract the threat posed by hindrance stressors. When individuals take time to learn new things at work, it helps them obtain useful resources including information, knowledge, abilities, and skills (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011) that are instrumental for problem solving, goal accomplishment, and personal development. In addition, learning something new can provide individuals with psychological resources such as experienced competence and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001; Frayne & Geringer, 2000). These instrumental and psychological resources built from learning can contribute to personal growth and future accomplishments (Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Sonenshein, Dutton, Grant, Spreitzer, & Sutcliffe, 2013), which might otherwise be thwarted by hindrance stressors. As a result, individuals will be less likely to engage in deviant behavior in response to hindrance stressors, because learning at least partially relieves resource loss or threat posed by the stressors.

We further propose that, when individuals take time to learn something new at work, the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance mediated by negative emotions will also be weaker. The instrumental resources that individuals gain through learning, including information, skills, knowledge, and abilities, can be used to deal with hindrance stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and individuals will thus experience fewer negative emotions in the face of those stressors. For example, by learning about networking skills, individuals may feel less distressed when facing organizational politics; by obtaining information about current trends in the profession, individuals may feel less anxious when experiencing ambiguity in the job. Furthermore, the psychological resources obtained from learning, such as experienced competence and self-efficacy, can make individuals more emotionally resilient when encountering hindrance stressors (Bandura, 2001; Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Huisman, 2006). Overall, through learning, individuals may equip themselves to deal with emotionally draining stressors and build psychological capacity that make them less likely to suffer negative emotions in the presence of stressors. When the relation from hindrance stressors to negative emotions is weaker, the indirect relationship from hindrance stressors to deviance via negative emotions will also be attenuated. In sum, we hypothesize about the buffering role of learning on both the overall and the mediated relationships between hindrance stressors and deviance.

> *Hypothesis 1:* Learning something new at work will moderate the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior at work, such that this relationship will be weaker at higher levels of learning.

> *Hypothesis 2:* (a) The relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions and (b) the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior at work mediated by negative emotions will be weaker at higher levels of learning.

Relaxation as a buffering factor. Relaxation is characterized by a state of low activation and gradual recuperation, and relaxation activities impose low levels of physical, intellectual, or social demands on individuals (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Examples of relaxation at work include having a coffee in the lounge, listening to music for a few minutes, or going for a short walk outside. We

expect that, when individuals take some time to relax at work, the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior will be weaker. Relaxation can temporarily provide refuge from stressful demands and conditions. As such, relaxation can suspend further loss of and threat to resources and provide opportunities for replenishment. Individuals will thus be less likely to engage in deviant behaviors, as they feel less driven to use such behaviors as a way of responding to or compensating for the loss and/or threat they have experienced from the hindrance stressors. These arguments are also consistent with the effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), which suggests that individuals' negative reactions to stressful factors can be relieved when exposure to stressful conditions is discontinued for some time (e.g., when individuals take time for relaxation).

When individuals take some time for relaxation at work, the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior mediated by negative emotions will also be weaker. Engaging in relaxation will tentatively shield stressful sources of negative emotions. Relaxation activities, by turning individuals' effort and attention away from work demands, temporarily keep individuals from explicitly encountering stressors that give rise to negative emotions, and render the need to deal with those emotionally taxing stressors less salient for the moment. For example, when an individual is struggling with red tape in the work, taking some time for relaxation (e.g., taking a walk outside) may allow the individual to tentatively turn away from those frustrating problems and end up feeling less upset. As such, although hindrance stressors are still present in the job, individuals may experience fewer negative emotions as a result of the temporarily reduced exposure to those stressors afforded by relaxation. When the hindrance stressors to negative emotions relationship is weaker with relaxation, the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance channeled through negative emotions will in turn be attenuated.

Hypothesis 3: Taking time for relaxation at work will moderate the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior at work, such that this relationship will be weaker at higher levels of relaxation.

Hypothesis 4: (a) The relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions and (b) the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviant behavior at work mediated by negative emotions will be weaker at higher levels of relaxation.

Overview of Research

We conducted two studies with employee samples using complementary designs.[1] Study 1 was an experience sampling study using a within-person design, which investigated the buffering roles of learning and relaxation at the day level. Study 2 used a between-person design to investigate buffering roles of learning and relaxation at work at the individual level, using multisource data. Study 1 tested Hypotheses 1 and 3, and Study 2 further included negative emotions to test the full model (Hypotheses 1–4). We included both within-person and between-person investigations because the job stressors-deviance relationship have been theorized and empirically studied at both within-person (e.g., Matta et al., 2014; Rodell & Judge, 2009) and between-person (e.g., Fox et al., 2001; Meier & Spector, 2013; Penney & Spector, 2005) levels.

Study 1

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants in this study were 103 full-time employees working in various organizations in the United States. Participants were employed in several industries (e.g., finance, education, health care, information) and worked an average of 42.3 hours per week (SD = 6.7). Participants' average age was 35.2 years (SD = 9.2), 62 of them (60%) were female, and 13% were of non-Caucasian ethnicities. On average, participants reported that their workday ran from 8:30 a.m. (SD = .93 hr) to 5:00 p.m. (SD = 1.07 hr). Participants were recruited through the online platform Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and were offered a monetary reward (i.e., $9). MTurk has been successfully used for collecting primary data in published organizational research using an experience sampling methodology (e.g., Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014). Research has also demonstrated MTurk as a platform that allows researchers to collect data that have adequate quality as well as comparable reliability to data collected from traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014; Sprouse, 2011).

The study lasted two work-weeks. Participants were asked to complete a general background survey (from the previous weekend until Monday) and then two daily surveys per day for eight consecutive workdays (from Wednesday to the next Friday). Daily survey links were sent to participants' cell phones. The first daily survey (sent at 1 p.m.) assessed participants' job stressors as well as learning and relaxation at work on that day; the second daily survey (sent at 4 p.m.) asked about participants' deviant behavior at work on that day. Participants were instructed to complete both daily surveys within three hours and were informed that the survey links would expire after that time window. We also checked the timestamps of the daily surveys to make sure they were completed at the appropriate time. The average time elapsed between completion of the two daily surveys was 3.1 hours (SD = .9 hr).

We matched participants' responses in the first and second daily surveys (response rate = 80.2% and 77.4% for the two daily surveys, respectively). Of the 115 participants who signed up for the study and completed the general survey, 12 individuals did not complete any or no more than two days of surveys and were not included in the final analyses.[2] The other individuals all completed daily surveys for at least half of the study period (i.e., four or more

[1] IRB approval for the studies was granted by the Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board of University of Michigan (HUM00108113, "Job Stressors, Unethical Behavior, and the Buffering Roles of Recovery Activities at Work (ESM2)"; HUM00092266, "Time Pressure and Unethical Behavior: Exploring Mechanisms and Buffering Factors").

[2] Results did not change when participants who completed only two days of surveys were included in the final sample.

days). Our final sample included 675 days nested within 103 individuals.

Measures.

Hindrance stressors. We used the eight-item scale from Rodell and Judge (2009) that was specifically developed to measure day-level hindrance stressors. Sample items include "Today, I have to go through a lot of red tape to get my job done" and "Today, my duties and work objectives are unclear to me" (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha computed separately for the eight days ranged between .79 and .91 (M = .87).

Learning and relaxation at work. To measure the extent to which participants took time for learning and relaxation at work, we used the mastery experience scale and the relaxation scale, respectively, from the recovery experience questionnaire developed by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007), and we adapted the items to capture activities at work instead of outside of work. As is common in experience sampling studies to use shortened scales to limit daily survey length (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010; Uy, Foo, & Aguinis, 2010), we used three items each for learning and relaxation based on the relevance of the item content for at-work settings. Participants indicated the extent to which they engaged in the listed behaviors at work on that day (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *To a very large extent*). Sample items for learning include "take time to learn something new" and "use part of the work time to do things that broaden my horizons." Cronbach's alpha ranged between .77 and .97 across days (M = .89). Sample items for relaxation include "use some time to relax" and "do relaxing things." Cronbach's alpha ranged between .94 and .97 (M = .96).

Workplace deviance. Similar to Rodell and Judge's (2009) study, we measured day-level deviance using 11 items from the Bennett and Robinson (2000) measure (including eight and three items from the organizational and interpersonal subdimensions, respectively). Participants indicated the extent to which they engaged in the listed behaviors on that day (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *To a very large extent*), and sample items include "took property from work without permission," "discussed confidential information with an unauthorized person," and "said something hurtful to someone at work." Cronbach's alpha ranged between .71 and .89 (M = .82).

Control variable: Challenge stressors. As challenge stressors are another type of job stressors conceptualized in the challenge-hindrance stressors framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), we included this variable for control purposes. We used the eight-item scale developed by Rodell and Judge (2009) for measuring day-level challenge stressors, and sample items include "Today, I have to work on a large number of projects and/or assignments" and "Today, I experienced severe time pressures in my work" (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha ranged between .88 and .95 (M = .92).

Following the approach in prior research (e.g., Lam, Wan, & Roussin, 2016; Sonnentag, Mojza, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2012), we conducted multilevel confirmatory analyses for the four variables assessed together in the same daily survey (i.e., hindrance stressors, learning, relaxation, challenge stressors), using Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012). The hypothesized four-factor model showed a reasonable fit to the data (χ^2 = 695.49, df = 374,[3] $p < .001$; CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .04). Loading any pair of these variables on one factor yielded poorer fit (best fitting alternative model, with hindrance stressors and challenge stressors combined as one factor: χ^2 = 1367.09, df = 388, $p < .001$; CFI = .88, TLI = .86, RMSEA = .06; Satorra–Bentler scaled χ^2 = 411.56, Δdf = 14, $p < .001$).

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and variable correlations. The null model shows that 52.7% of the variance in deviance was within person and 47.3% was between person.

Data in this study comprised day-level variables nested within individuals, so we conducted hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). To appropriately test and interpret the within-person relationships, we centered the predictor variables at each person's mean value (Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000; Ohly et al., 2010).

This study tested Hypotheses 1 and 3, which predict that the relation between hindrance stressors and deviance would be weaker at higher levels of learning (H1) and relaxation (H3). We conducted the analyses using a series of nested models (see Table 2). In the null model, only the intercept was included. In Model 1, the main effect of hindrance stressors was entered. In Model 2a and 2b, the product terms of hindrance stressors with learning and with relaxation were entered, respectively, to examine the proposed moderation. In Model 3, both product terms were entered at the same time. For control purposes, challenge stressors were included in all models.[4]

In testing moderation (see Table 2), Model 2a shows that the product term between hindrance stressors and learning was significant in predicting deviance (b = −.04, SE = .02, $p < .05$), and it remained significant in Model 3 (b = −.05, SE = .02 $p < .05$) when assessed together with the product term involving relaxation. This effect explained 8.8% of the within-person variance in deviance. Figure 2 shows a plot of the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance at high versus low levels (±1 SD) of learning (Aiken & West, 1991). Simple slope tests reveal that hindrance stressors positively related to deviance at a low level of learning (b = .06, SE = .03, $p < .05$) but did not significantly relate to deviance at a high level of learning (b = −.03, SE = .03, *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Model 2b shows that the product term between hindrance stressors and relaxation was not significant in predicting deviance (b = −.03, SE = .02, *ns*), and it remained nonsignificant in Model 3 (b = −.03, SE = .02, *ns*) when assessed together with the

[3] Following the approach outlined by Byrne (2012), we reviewed model parameters on error covariances that were indicated to involve major misspecification when constrained to zero (i.e., with large modification indices), but we only included additional parameters to be freely estimated if they were conceptually meaningful. As a result of applying this procedure, nine error covariances among the eight hindrance stressors items and seven error covariances among the eight challenge stressors items were allowed to be freely estimated in the model. These parameters were included at both levels of the model to ensure psychometric isomorphism (Tay, Woo, & Vermunt, 2014). They were similarly included in the subsequent models assessed to ensure consistency and comparability.

[4] Results remained essentially the same when challenge stressors were not included in the models.

Table 1
Study 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	*SD*	ICC1	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hindrance stressors	2.21	1.02	.53	(.87)	.45**	.12	.08	.29**
2. Challenge stressors	4.06	1.40	.43	.43**	(.92)	.20*	−.31**	−.10
3. Learning	2.67	1.49	.57	.14**	.22**	(.89)	.32**	.17
4. Relaxation	2.35	1.37	.49	.01	−.25**	.19**	(.96)	.41**
5. Deviance	1.20	.44	.47	.15**	−.04	.11**	.22**	(.82)

Note. ICC = intraclass correlation. Correlations below the diagonal are day-level correlations (n = 675). Correlations above the diagonal are person-level correlations (n = 103). Mean Cronbach's alphas across days are shown in parentheses along the diagonal.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

product term of learning. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 about the moderation role of relaxation was not supported.[5]

As a robustness check, we also conducted supplementary analyses in which product terms of challenge stressors (Challenge stressors × Learning, Challenge stressors × Relaxation) were added to Model 3 as additional controls, and the results remained essentially the same.

Discussion

Study 1 provided some evidence for the proposed buffering role of learning; the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance was weaker on days when an individual engaged in higher levels of learning at work. On the other hand, this relationship did not vary with the extent to which individuals took time for relaxation at work on a day. Therefore, although people might be prone to try to do less (e.g., relaxing) rather than do more (e.g., learning) when experiencing stressful factors at work, this first study suggests that learning might be more helpful for having less deviance in stressful environments. This finding also addresses a call in the behavioral ethics literature to better understand factors that can limit the deleterious link between the organizational context and individual misconduct (Moore & Gino, 2015).

One limitation of Study 1 is that all variables came from the same source. However, this study followed recommendations for experience sampling studies to use temporal separation between the variables as a way to alleviate common method variance concerns (Beal, 2015; Ohly et al., 2010). Furthermore, research has provided evidence that common method variance cannot create artificial interaction effects but can actually attenuate true interactions (Evans, 1985; Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Thus, potential method effects should not pose a threat to the finding regarding the moderating role of learning.

Study 1 examined the buffering roles of learning and relaxation at the day level. In Study 2, we sought to further examine their buffering roles at the individual level. Furthermore, in Study 2 we included negative emotions to examine the full model. Study 2 also provides the advantage of using supervisor ratings of employees' deviance. Although a meta-analysis shows that self- and other-ratings of deviance tend to be moderately to highly correlated and that they have similar relations with correlates (Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012), the use of supervisor assessments in Study 2 provides a useful measurement triangulation.

Study 2

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants in this study included 221 pairs of employees and supervisors working in the United States (i.e., 442 participants in total). These participants worked in a variety of industries (e.g., finance, health care, professional services, education). Focal employees' mean age was 43.7 years (SD = 12.6). Of the focal employees, 59.8% were female and 22% were of non-Caucasian ethnicities; 80.7% received at least a college degree. Among these employees, 94.2% were working full-time, and the majority (58.2%) had worked more than five years in their current organization; 33.2% were in nonmanagerial job positions. The supervisors' mean age was 49.7 years (SD = 9.3); 34.6% were female, and 18% were of non-Caucasian ethnicities; 94.4% received at least a college degree; the majority (59.0%) had worked for more than 10 years in their current organization. The average time supervisors worked with their matched focal employees was approximately seven years.

We recruited the participants through the subject pool at a large Midwestern university in the U.S. Similar to prior published research (e.g., Grant & Mayer, 2009; Mayer, Thau, Workman, Dijke, & Cremer, 2012), a snowball sampling procedure was used to collect multisource data. First, 446 university students signed up to be volunteers for recruiting study participants. As an incentive, they received credit for an introductory management course. These

[5] Although we focused on overall deviance for theoretical reasons, for exploratory purposes we conducted supplementary analyses in which we separated organizational and interpersonal deviance items and tested them as separate dependent variables. Learning moderated the relationship between hindrance stressors and organizational deviance items (b = −.06, SE = .02, $p < .01$), though not the relationship between hindrance stressors and interpersonal deviance items (b = .01, SE = .03, ns). One possible reason might be that the hindrance stressors measure included more items that are organizationally focused (e.g., red tape, role ambiguity) than interpersonally focused. If we used an alternative stressor measure that more explicitly focused on interpersonal factors (e.g., incivility), it is possible that the results would be stronger for interpersonal deviance. However, this separate analysis may not be a fair test to infer about interpersonal deviance, given that it has a smaller number of items (i.e., three items). Relaxation did not moderate the relationship between hindrance stressors and either organizational (b = −.03, SE = .02, ns) or interpersonal (b = −.03, SE = .04, ns) deviance items.

Table 2
Study 1: Predicting Day-Level Deviance Using Multilevel Modeling

Variable	Null model	Model 1	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3
Intercept	1.20** (.03)	1.20** (.03)	1.21** (.03)	1.20** (.03)	1.20** (.03)
Predictor variables (Level 1: Day-level)					
Challenge stressors		−.01 (.02)	−.01 (.02)	−.01 (.02)	−.01 (.02)
Hindrance stressors		.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Learning			.00 (.02)		.00 (.02)
Relaxation				.00 (.01)	−.01 (.01)
Interactions (Level 1: Day-level)					
Hindrance stressors × Learning			−.04* (.02)		−.05* (.02)
Hindrance stressors × Relaxation				−.03 (.02)	−.03 (.02)
Pseudo $R^2_{(level\text{-}1)}$	—	.00	.09	.02	.09

Note. Dependent variable is day-level deviance. n = 675 days (nested in 103 individuals). The estimates reported are unstandardized coefficients; standard errors are displayed in parentheses. Level 1 (day-level) predictor variables are person-mean centered. Level-1 pseudo R^2 in these multilevel models is calculated based on proportional reduction of within-person error variance due to level-1 predictors (Snijders & Bosker, 1999).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

recruiting volunteers each invited a full-time employee to voluntarily participate in the study, and the invited person also provided the full name and email information of his or her supervisor. Then the research team directly contacted the focal employees and paired supervisors using the names and emails submitted.[6] We asked focal employees to fill out a main online survey, and asked the supervisors to fill out a complementary survey in which they rated the focal employee's workplace deviance. After matching responses, the final sample consisted of 221 employee-supervisor pairs, representing an overall response rate of 49.6%.

Measures.

Hindrance stressors. To measure hindrance stressors, we used the five-item scale developed by Cavanaugh and colleagues (2000). Compared with the Rodell and Judge (2009) measure in Study 1 that was specifically developed for day-level hindrance stressors, this scale is more commonly used for measuring hindrance stressors in general. Focal employees indicated the extent to which each of the listed things was causing stress for them in their current work (1 = *Causing no stress*, 7 = *Causing a great deal of stress*). Sample items include "the degree to which politics rather than performance affects organizational decisions" and "the inability to clearly understand what is expected of me on the job" (α = .84).

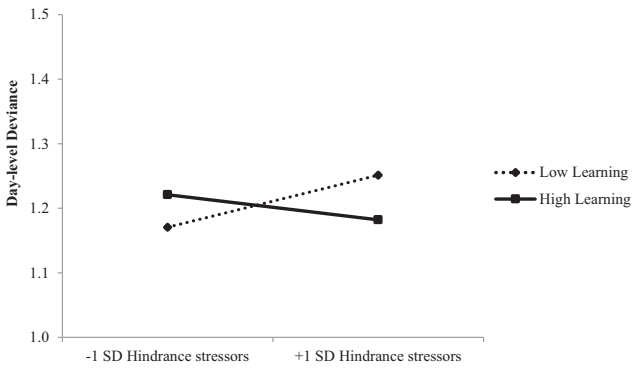

Figure 2. Study 1: Learning moderating the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance (day-level).

Learning and relaxation at work. As in Study 1, we used Sonnentag and Fritz's (2007) mastery experience and relaxation scales to measure learning and relaxation at work. Here we used the four-item full scales. Items were similarly adapted to capture activities at work. Focal employees indicated the extent to which they engaged in the listed activities at work on a typical workday (1 = *Never*, 7 = *Always*). Sample items for learning include "take time to learn new things at work" and "use part of the work time to do things that broaden my horizons" (α = .92). Sample items for relaxation include "use some time to relax" and "do relaxing things" (α = .97).

Negative emotions. We used the 10-item scale from PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1994) to measure negative emotions at work. Focal employees indicated the extent to which they experienced each of the listed states at work (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Extremely*), and sample items include "nervous," "hostile," and "upset" (α = .92).

Workplace deviance. To measure focal employees' deviance, we used the 17-item scale from Newstrom and Ruch (1975; also seeAkaah & Lund [1994] for use of this scale). This scale largely overlaps with the Bennett and Robinson (2000) measure but also allows us to capture additional forms of deviant behavior at work, including some more severe actions that most would consider to be unethical. Each supervisor indicated the extent to which the

[6] We are aware of some potential limitations of the snowball sampling procedure. However, in this study we believe that the opportunity this method afforded to obtain data that had multiple sources and came from participants in a variety of organizations counterbalanced some of the limitations. In addition, we took several measures to minimize potential problems, including making sure that it was actual employees who responded to the surveys. First, the recruiting volunteers were required to provide full names of invited participants along with each email they submitted. Second, to ensure that the recruiting volunteers had no incentive to create survey responses themselves, course credit was granted to recruiting volunteers merely based on submitting valid names and email information and was not contingent upon whether the invited participants actually provided survey responses. In addition, recruiting volunteers were offered the opportunity to complete an alternative assignment for the course credit if they had difficulty finding eligible and voluntary participants, and as such they would not feel pressured to recruit ineligible participants that would compromise the quality of the sample.

matched focal employee engaged in the listed behaviors at work (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Frequently*), and sample items include "use company services for personal use," "falsify time/quality/quantity reports," and "pass blame for errors to an innocent co-worker" ($\alpha = .91$). Supervisors also rated the extent to which they felt confident in their ability to evaluate the focal employee's deviant behavior (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*), and on average supervisors showed a reasonably high level of confidence ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 1.47$).[7]

Control variable: Challenge stressors. As in Study 1, we measured challenge stressors for control purposes.[8] Challenge stressors were measured using the six-item scale from Cavanaugh and colleagues (2000), with sample items including "the number of projects and/or assignments I have at work" and "the scope of responsibility my position entails" (1 = *Causing no stress*, 7 = *Causing a great deal of stress*; $\alpha = .94$).

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses for the study variables. The hypothesized measurement model with all six factors (i.e., hindrance stressors, learning, relaxation, negative emotions, deviance, and challenge stressors) showed a reasonable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1513.10$, $df = 941$,[9] $p < .001$; CFI = .93, TLI = .92; RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06). Loading any pair of these variables on one factor resulted in poorer fit (best fitting alternative model, with hindrance stressors and negative emotions combined as one factor: $\chi^2 = 1703.36$, $df = 946$, $p < .001$; CFI = .90, TLI = .89; RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .07; $\Delta\chi^2 = 190.28$, $\Delta df = 5$, $p < .001$).

Results

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables.

In all analyses below, predictor variables were mean centered. We first tested Hypotheses 1 and 3, which predict that the direct relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance will be weaker at higher levels of learning and relaxation. Results of multiple regression analyses (see Table 4) show that, when directly predicting deviance, the product terms of hindrance stressors with learning ($b = -.01$, $SE = .02$, *ns*) and with relaxation ($b = .02$, $SE = .02$, *ns*) were not significant. Thus, in this study, learning and relaxation did not moderate the direct relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance.

However, as hypothesized, learning and relaxation may still moderate the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance mediated by negative emotions.[10] First, H2a and H4a predict learning and relaxation as moderators of the relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions. Table 5 presents the results of multiple regression analyses. Model 2a shows that the product term between hindrance stressors and learning was significantly negative in predicting negative emotions ($b = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$). This effect remained significant in Model 3 ($b = -.08$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$) when assessed simultaneously with the product term involving relaxation. This effect explained 1.6% of the variance in negative emotions. Figure 3 shows a plot of the relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions (Aiken & West, 1991), and simple slope tests demonstrate a less positive relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions at a high level of learning ($b = .15$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$) than at a low level of learning ($b = .33$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported. In contrast, Model 2b shows that the product term between hindrance stressors and relaxation was not significant in predicting negative emotions ($b = .01$, $SE = .03$, *ns*), and it remained nonsignificant in Model 3 ($b = .02$, $SE = .03$, *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 4a was not supported. For a robustness check, we also conducted supplementary analyses in which product terms involving challenge stressors (i.e., Challenge stressors × Learning, Challenge stressors × Relaxation) were added to Model 3, and the results remained essentially the same.

H2b and H4b further predict learning and relaxation as moderators of the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance mediated by negative emotions. We tested these hypotheses by performing moderated mediation analyses, using path analysis and bootstrapping procedures (number of resamples = 2000) and assessing relationships of interest at high versus low levels (mean ± 1 *SD*) of the moderators (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Challenge stressors were also included in all analyses for control purposes. We used Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012) to perform the analyses. As results in Table 6 show, the indirect effect of hindrance stressors on deviance via negative emotions[11] was less positive at a high level of learning ($ab = .021$, $SE = .012$, $p < .10$; 95% CI [.004, .052]) than at a low level of learning ($ab = .046$, $SE = .020$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [.014, .094]). The point estimate of this difference reached significance under one-tailed testing, and the 95% confidence interval shows that this difference was significant[12] ($ab_{difference} = -.025$, $SE = .015$, 95% CI [−.067, −.005]). These results supported Hypothesis 2b. Using formulas from Preacher et al. (2007), Figure 4 depicts the hindrance stressors-deviance indirect relationship at high versus low learning.

Table 6 then shows that the indirect effects of hindrance stressors on deviance at a high level of relaxation ($ab = .037$, $SE = .019$, $p < .10$; 95% CI [.009, .085]) versus at a low level of relaxation ($ab = .035$, $SE = .017$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [.011, .080])

[7] Results essentially did not change when the 16 cases in which supervisors' rating confidence was lower than 4 (i.e., below the midpoint of the scale) were excluded from the analyses.

[8] As in Study 1, results remained essentially unchanged when we did not control for challenge stressors.

[9] Applying the same criteria and procedures as in Study 1 (see Footnote 2), we reviewed model parameters on error covariances that were indicated to need modification, and we considered their conceptual meaningfulness. As a result, 6 error covariances among the challenge stressors items, 12 error covariances among the 10 negative emotions items, 14 error covariances among the 17 deviance items, and 1 error covariance among the hindrance stressors items were allowed to be freely estimated (rather than constrained to zero) in the model. These parameters were also included in the subsequent models assessed to ensure consistency and comparability.

[10] Model 4 in Table 4 confirmed that negative emotions were positively related to deviance when examined alongside other predictors ($b = .12$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$).

[11] The direct effect of hindrance stressors on deviance was nonsignificant ($b = .02$, $SE = .04$, *ns*), and a chi-square test showed that its exclusion did not affect model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = .38$, $\Delta df = 1$, *n.s.*); the direct effect path was thus excluded from the model for parsimony.

[12] Because the bootstrapping procedure more accurately reflects the asymmetric nature of the sampling distribution of an indirect effect (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010), we used bootstrap confidence intervals to interpret the difference in indirect effects.

Table 3
Study 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Hindrance stressors	2.65	1.25	(.84)					
2. Challenge stressors	3.93	1.51	.33**	(.94)				
3. Learning	4.38	1.33	−.12	−.03	(.92)			
4. Relaxation	2.71	1.49	.04	−.15*	.18**	(.97)		
5. Negative emotions	2.00	.86	.46**	.37**	−.21**	.10	(.90)	
6. Deviance	1.38	.51	.15*	.11	−.04	.04	.24**	(.91)

Note. $N = 221$. Reliability values (Cronbach's alphas) are reported in parentheses on the diagonal.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

were not significantly different ($ab_{difference} = .001$, $SE = .017$, 95% CI [−.029 .038]). Hypothesis 4b was thus not supported.[13]

Discussion

Using multisource survey data, Study 2 provided further evidence for the buffering roles of learning new things at work: the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance mediated by negative emotions was weaker at higher levels of learning. Again, relaxation did not show a buffering role.

Note that, unlike in Study 1, in Study 2 learning did not moderate the overall direct relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance. There are some potential reasons for this result. First, compared with Study 1, the Study 2 deviance measure included more severe forms of deviant behaviors. Given that deterring these more severe deviant behaviors under stressors might need more powerful solutions, it was potentially harder for learning to show a buffering role in Study 2. Second, compared with Study 1 in which stressors and deviance were assessed in a single day (i.e., temporarily relatively close), in Study 2 hindrance stressors and deviance were assessed *in general* at work. Thus, stress and deviance might be temporarily further away from one another, potentially making it harder to find a buffering role on this direct relationship. Nevertheless, as expected, learning served as a buffering condition for the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance channeled through negative emotions.

Note that, in both Studies 1 and 2, the mean and the variance of the deviance outcome variable were relatively small compared to other variables. Means and variances of deviance falling on the lower range is common in previous studies that similarly examined overall deviance (e.g., Christian & Ellis, 2011; Lee & Allen, 2002; Rodell & Judge, 2009). Considering that deviance can be highly costly and can accumulate to have substantial consequences, even a low base-rate of deviance should be viewed with caution for organizations.

General Discussion

In the present research, we examined the buffering roles of a resource-building activity at work (i.e., learning something new) and a demand-shielding activity at work (i.e., taking time for relaxation) on the relationship between hindrance stressors and workplace deviance. In two studies, we found evidence that learning served as a buffering condition. Study 1 demonstrated that the hindrance stressors-deviance relationship was weaker on days with higher levels of learning. Study 2 included negative emotions and showed that the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance via negative emotions was also weaker with higher learning. In contrast, taking time for relaxation at work did not serve a buffering role in either study.

One potential reason that taking time for relaxation at work did not show a buffering role may lie in some of its limitations. Relaxing at work by itself does not provide individuals with many useful tools to combat stressful situations. When an individual comes out of relaxation activities at work and realizes one's failure to change the stressful situation despite the time consumed, it may generate nervousness and frustration and therefore dilute the restorative functions afforded by relaxation. Relaxation may thus fail to act as a useful buffering condition.

Theoretical Contributions

Researchers are beginning to explore the implications of "doing more"—engagement in behaviors that reflect an active approach and take effort—in the face of stressful demands at work. One example is the recent, evolving conversation in the literature around helping behaviors at work. Researchers highlight that helping others at work is effortful and may have depleting effects (Gabriel, Koopman, Rosen, & Johnson, in press; Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016), and yet it can still be replenishing and enriching (Lam et al., 2016; Koopman et al., 2016). In fact, research suggests that help-giving may even serve to alleviate the depleting effects of certain stressful demands (e.g., emotional labor; Uy, Lin, & Ilies, in press). These developments suggest that it is worthwhile and important to further understand the implications of workplace activities that seem to be effortful but are conducive to developing positive resources in demanding work environments. Extant research, however, has remained silent on such issues when it comes to the commonly found association between job stressors and deviance (e.g., Eschleman et al., 2015; Fox et al., 2001; Meier & Spector, 2013; Penney & Spector, 2005; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Zhang et al., 2014), providing little understanding of whether "doing more" (e.g., engaging in resource-building activities that take action and effort) and "doing less" (e.g., engaging in demand-shielding activities that might be easier and less effortful) may both serve as useful remedies for this potent problem in workplaces.

[13] Because the measure of deviance in Study 2 does not have the organizational and interpersonal two-dimension structure and only two items contained behaviors that were more interpersonally focused, for this study we did not do the same exploratory analyses as we did in Study 1.

Table 4
Study 2: Regression Analyses Predicting Deviance

Variable	Model 1	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	1.37*** (.04)	1.37*** (.04)	1.37*** (.04)	1.37*** (.04)	1.13*** (.10)
Predictor variables					
Challenge stressors	.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.01 (.03)
Hindrance stressors	.06† (.03)	.06† (.03)	.06† (.03)	.05 (.03)	.02 (.03)
Learning		−.01 (.03)		−.02 (.03)	.00 (.03)
Relaxation			.02 (.02)	.02 (.03)	.01 (.03)
Negative emotions					.12* (.05)
Interactions					
Hindrance stressors × Learning		−.01 (.02)		−.01 (.02)	−.00 (.02)
Hindrance stressors × Relaxation			.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)
R^2	.03	.03	.04	.04	.07
F	3.16*	1.61	2.02†	1.46	2.15*
ΔR^2	—	.00	.01	.01	.04
F		.10	.89	.63	1.72

Note. $N = 221$. Dependent variable is deviance. The estimates reported are unstandardized coefficients; standard errors are displayed in parentheses. ΔR^2 values are based on comparison with Model 1 as the baseline model.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Our research integrates perspectives from the deviance literature with conservation of resources theory to provide new and useful insights for addressing this issue. By developing a theoretical model that adopts a conservation of resources lens and by investigating resource-building and demand-shielding activities in parallel, we advance an understanding of buffering options that lie in individuals' everyday workplace activities. In doing so, this research provides greater specificity to a more action-oriented perspective for tackling workplace deviance, going beyond a focus on less malleable remedies such as individual dispositions (e.g., Eschleman et al., 2015; Penney & Spector, 2005). Indeed, our findings show that, when it comes to alleviating deviance in stressful work environments, building positive resources through learning might be more helpful than simply shielding demands through relaxation.

Second, this research also contributes to the behavioral ethics literature in terms of approaches to limiting misconduct. Researchers point out that unethical behavior is often difficult to eliminate because of the presence of situational forces (Moore & Gino, 2015), such as job stressors. Addressing this challenge, Zhang et al. (2014) proposed a theory that involves two types of approaches to reducing unethical behavior: (a) value-oriented approaches that appeal to individuals' internal moral desires and (b) structure-oriented approaches that reshape factors such as incentives and tasks. The present research provides some useful extensions to this theoretical perspective, particularly to structure-oriented approaches. First, current views of structure-oriented approaches tend to focus on factors that directly relate to the (un)ethical behaviors themselves, such as shifting rewards and costs of (un)ethical options (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 1999; Zhang et al., 2014). The present research suggests that factors that may not naturally bear ethical intentions—such as learning new things—may also help address ethical issues, suggesting that structure-oriented approaches can be indirect. Additionally, current discussions of structure-oriented approaches mainly emphasize extrinsic factors that

Table 5
Study 2: Regression Analyses Predicting Negative Emotions

Variable	Model 1	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3
Intercept	2.01*** (.05)	1.99*** (.05)	2.01*** (.05)	1.99*** (.05)
Predictor variables				
Challenge stressors	.14*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.16*** (.04)
Hindrance stressors	.27*** (.04)	.24*** (.04)	.26*** (.04)	.22*** (.04)
Learning		−.10** (.04)		−.13** (.04)
Relaxation			.07† (.04)	.10** (.04)
Interactions				
Hindrance stressors × Learning		−.06* (.03)		−.08** (.03)
Hindrance stressors × Relaxation			01 (.03)	.02 (.03)
R^2	.27	.31	.28	.34
F	38.58***	23.27***	20.37***	17.41***
ΔR^2	—	.04**	.01	.07***
F	—	6.07**	1.84	5.24***

Note. $N = 221$. Dependent variable is negative emotions. The estimates reported are unstandardized coefficients; standard errors are displayed in parentheses. ΔR^2 values are based on comparison with Model 1 as the baseline model.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

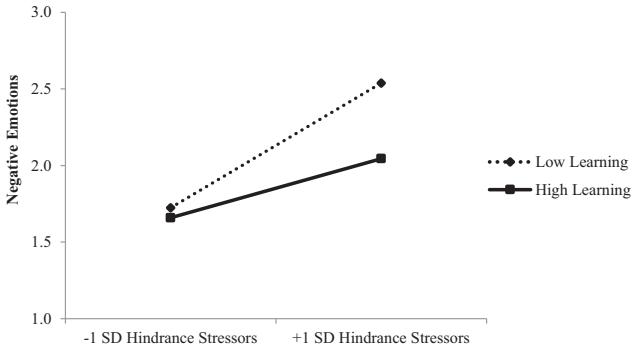

Figure 3. Study 2: Learning moderating the relationship between hindrance stressors and negative emotions.

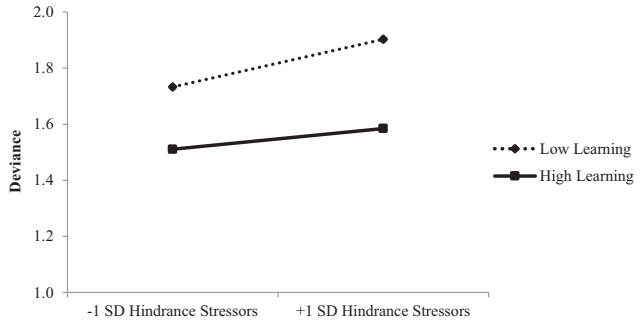

Figure 4. Study 2: Learning moderating the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance mediated by negative emotions.

can influence individuals (Zhang et al., 2014). Our research suggests that things that individuals can do for themselves—such as taking time for learning—may also play a beneficial role, clarifying that structure-oriented solutions do not necessarily have to be extrinsically imposed.

The present research also contributes to the literature on learning in organizations by demonstrating an important, but unexamined, unintended positive consequence of learning. Learning is often thought to be important for organizations because it can contribute to increased human capital and enhanced task performance (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Noe et al., 2014; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). The present research, however, reveals that learning can also play a beneficial role for addressing workplace deviance, which is not traditionally thought to be associated with learning activities, thus answering recent calls in the literature to consider an expanded range of learning's workplace outcomes (Noe et al., 2014). In a similar vein, by revealing the buffering role of learning for employees' deviant behavior, our research supports and extends a broader view of learning forwarded in the field (e.g., see Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Weick, 1998; Wilson, Goodman, & Cronin, 2007), which emphasizes that learning is not merely a channel to build specific knowledge stocks but is something that can inherently foster individuals' desirable behavioral repertories at work (Sitkin et al., 1998; Wilson et al., 2007). Demonstrating and extending this perspective, our research highlights the relevance of learning for having less deviant behavior from employees in the face of work stressors.

Finally, our studies also contribute to research on conservation of resources theory. Resource conservation and resource acquisition, which involve preventing further resource loss and obtaining additional resources, respectively, are two central aspects of this theory (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1998). Not all studies drawing upon or testing tenets of conservation of resources theory bring together these two elements. Some studies have attempted to do so, such as by focusing on a specific form of behavior (e.g., voice) and conceptualizing how it has both resource conservation and resource acquisition aspects (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2012), or by investigating how resource conservation motives may relate to investment for resource acquisition (e.g., Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011). Our research presents yet another way of bringing together these two core aspects of the theory, namely examining activities that represent resource conservation (e.g., shielding work demands through relaxation) and resource acquisition (e.g., learning new things at work) in

Table 6
Study 2: Moderated Mediation Analyses of the Indirect Effect Between Hindrance Stressors and Deviance

	Hindrance stressors → Negative emotions → Deviance			
Moderator	Path *a*	Path *b*	Indirect effect *ab* [95% CI]	Difference in indirect effect [95% CI]
Learning				
Low learning	.32*** (.06)	.14* (.06)	.046* (.020) [.014, .094]	—
High learning	.15** (.05)	.14* (.06)	.021† (.012) [.004, .052]	−.025† (.015) [−.067, −.005]
Relaxation				
Low relaxation	.25*** (.06)	.14* (.06)	.035* (.017) [.011, .080]	—
High relaxation	.26*** (.08)	.14* (.06)	.037† (.019) [.009, .085]	.001 (.017) [−.029, .038]

Note. $N = 221$. The estimates reported are unstandardized coefficients; standard errors are shown in parentheses.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

tandem, which enables parallel understanding of both processes. Indeed, findings of the present research imply that activities related to these two principles do not always provide the same benefits.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research has several limitations that provide implications for future research. First, we focused on one specific form of resource-building activity (i.e., learning) and one specific form of demand-shielding activity (i.e., relaxation). Learning and relaxation well represent activities that construct positive resources and shield work demands, respectively, and they have both been invoked in previous research drawing on conservation of resources theory (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Nevertheless, future research may investigate additional forms of resource-building activities (e.g., relationship building) and demand-shielding activities (e.g., psychologically detaching) to more comprehensively understand their potential roles. Related, given that the participants in our studies worked in various jobs and organizations, we used measures for learning and relaxation that included more general items. Future research that looks into a single context could consider using measures that involve more specific behaviors (e.g., reading online materials, listening to music) to obtain greater precision in assessing learning and relaxation.

Second, we assessed the mechanism of negative emotions in the indirect relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance. Our focus on negative emotions was intended to build on prior research that has found its mediating effect (e.g., Fox et al., 2001; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Congruent with prior research, our findings (Study 2) show that negative emotions fully mediated the relationship between hindrance stressors and deviance, which suggests that, even if there might be other mediating mechanisms, they did not play a significant role in the study. Nevertheless, future research may test alternative mechanisms for the proposed relationships, such as organizational justice (Zhang et al., 2014) or self-regulation depletion (e.g., Welsh & Ordóñez, 2014).

Finally, we acknowledge that there are some study design limitations. The 3-hr temporal separation of daily surveys in Study 1 to alleviate common method concerns was not particularly long. We chose this length of temporal separation given the short time frame of the entire workday (on average 8.5 hours in this study), and because it allowed us to assess job stressors and learning/relaxation activities not too early in the day to avoid incomplete representation, as well as assess deviance not too late in the day to avoid retrospective bias (Uy et al., 2010). Study 2, which used supervisor ratings of deviance, complemented Study 1 for its design limitations, and its finding provides additional support for the conceptual model. We should also note that our studies do not provide causal evidence, and we encourage researchers to explore alternative designs, such as field experiments, to better capture the interventional effects of learning and relaxation activities.

Practical Implications

Our research offers some practical implications for organizations. When jobs are consistently stressful, managers may feel that they are rather constrained in trying to reduce transgressions in the workplace. Many job stressors (e.g., organizational politics, red tape) may have arisen from larger institutional problems that cannot be resolved overnight, and their persistent presence in the work environment can make it challenging for managers to address deviance at work. Our findings suggest an alternative, potentially effective way for dealing with this issue. That is, managers may introduce opportunities for employees to learn new things in their work or facilitate employees' own effort for learning during work time. Similarly, employees who wish to prevent their own conduct from falling prey to stressful factors can also consciously seek ways to learn something new in their everyday work.

This research also suggests that relaxation may not always be as helpful as people sometimes believe, depending on the purpose of relaxation. Although relaxation may be used to promote psychological well-being and reduce fatigue (Trougakos et al., 2014), when it specifically comes to deviance issues in a stressful work environment, managers and employees may not necessarily find relaxation useful and can instead turn to resource-building activities.

Conclusion

Workplace deviance is costly for organizations and individuals, and unfortunately it can arise from job stressors, which are commonplace in most organizations. To address this problem, this research turns to employees' workplace activities. The findings suggest that taking time to learn new things at work can serve as a buffering condition for deviance in stressful work environments, whereas taking time for relaxation at work does not appear to play such a buffering role. As such, more can be less—under times of stress, doing *more* (i.e., learning, and not relaxing) might actually be more beneficial for having *less* deviance in the workplace.

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