

The Role of Organizational Justice in Determining Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT

A fair procedural and distributive justice have the capacity to influence employees' organizational commitment. However, there are some limitations in the past studies whereby the link between organizational justice and organizational commitment has been found to be inconsistent. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between justice and commitment. This study has adopted a quantitative research design using a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between all the dimensions of organizational justice and every dimensions of organizational commitment except between procedural justice and normative commitment. This finding suggests that not all components of organizational justice have a positive and significant linkage towards organizational commitment. Moreover, distributive justice was found to be the most dominant factor that influences organizational commitment. This result implies that the employees are more concerned about the outcome/results than on the process of making the outcome/results. This may be because the employees have little control or involvement in the decision-making process or do not foresee their future involvement in the process, and thus their perceived commitment is made primarily based on their perceived fairness of the resource allocation than on the decision-making process

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Distributive Justice, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Justice, Procedural Justice

1. INTRODUCTION

Past studies have shown evidence linking organizational justice and organizational commitment (Sari & Hanif, 2015; Kim, 2009; Kaul, 2017). The concept of organizational justice dated back to Adam's theory of equity. Adam (1965) compared individuals who worked in the same organizations in terms of input (work experience, educational qualification, training, effort), and output (salaries, work contribution, promotions, bonuses, recognition, motivation). He found that these individuals were compared with each other and when they found a gap between the input and output, they would consider the overall outcome as injustice. This injustice is regarded as a form of discrimination by the employees which consequently influences their organizational commitment (Parker & Kohlmeyer, 2005). On a different note, Kim (2009) stated that employees who were treated fairly by their employers are more likely to demonstrate higher commitment, and thereafter improve their potential at work such as by taking up more responsibilities and offering help to co-workers (Kaul, 2017). Based on Ardakani (2012), organizational justice can be further categorized into distributive and procedural justice.

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Distributive justice is known as the fair distribution (Yusof, 2001), specifically employees' perceptions of the distribution of yield which includes rewards and punishments (Hidayah, 2014; Seyyed Javadin & Farahi, 2008). It also refers to an equal share of the outcome towards action and performance (Buluc & Gunes, 2014). Employees who contributed to acknowledge the organization objective will be rewarded or vice versa punished when they fail (Colquit & Chertkoff, 2002). Procedural justice on the other hand is defined as the process that is involved in the decision-making regarding resource allocation (Rahman et al, 2016; Cropanzana et al, 20007), or in other words, how the outcome is determined (Haryatmoko, 2002). This outcome is also referred to as the regulation, punishment, or law (Raza et al, 2013).

Although past studies linking organizational justice and organizational commitment are rather extensive (for example Gichira, 2016; Zia-ur-Rehman et al., 2003), there is inconsistency in terms of which justice dimension has a greater impact on organizational commitment. Some studies show that procedural justice has a greater impact compared to distributive justice (Ghafourian, 2014; Hwei & Santosa, 2012; Murtaza et al., 2011). Moreover, there is a limited number of such studies within the context of Malaysia, and in the education sector. Thus, the positive relationship between the two variables cannot simply be generalized into other settings. These factors motivated the conduct of this research which primarily aims to investigate the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment in a private educational institution located in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. This institution was chosen due to its unique position as a company limited by guarantee under a public university. It adopts a bicameral structure which comprises of the academic and corporate structure. The first structure is academic governance relating to the public university, whilst the latter is related to company governance such as human resources, business development, information technology, and finance. In simple terms, the institution is a part of the larger public university ecosystem but operates as a limited company. The management of the private institution is among the permanent staff from the public university who were appointed on a term basis. Although it operates privately, it is bound to comply with the regulations and approval from the main office.

It is thus important to investigate employees' organizational justice, as well as their organizational commitment which, if unsatisfied, may influence employees' intention to leave. Edwards (2012) stated that employees believe that fair procedural and distributive justice shows that the employers are giving an indication that the employees are respected and appreciated for their effort. In the context of this study, the employees would expect that an increase in the income would correlate with an increase in the benefits that the employees would receive. However, this was not the case, as evidenced in the Employee Reviews (2018), which revealed that the high turnover rate (230 employees have left the institution within the last 6 years) was due to dissatisfaction towards employees' benefit, salary as well as a career path. In a feedback column in jobstreet.com (Employee Reviews, 2018), the employees of the institution stated the challenges they faced had made them leave the organization. Among them are matters related to stressful moments handling students and lecturers, lack of communication among departments causing difficulty to cooperate, especially when there are misunderstandings of job specification of each staff, and the tasks given to the staff. Some of the ex-employees also stated that they left because there was no clear information given to them about employees' benefits, employees' salary grade, and employees' career path (Employees Reviews, 2018).

According to Ponnu and Chuah (2018) organizational commitment has a high correlation towards employees' intention to leave. Once they have the intention to leave, regardless of whether there is an opportunity or not, their emotional state will be withdrawn from committing to the organization and will lead to other problems (Jovan Cjhia-Jung Hsu, 2002).

This study sets out to answer the following research questions; (i) what is the level of organizational justice is, (ii) what is the level of organizational commitment, (iii) what is the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment, and (iv) which dimension of organizational justice is more dominant in influencing organizational commitment. The subsequent section conceptualizes the variables and dimensions under study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational justice has been defined in many ways. Hidayah (2014) for instance regards organizational justice as an assessment, perception, or balance that exists through comparison of two activities i.e. the similarity of the situation by assessing the outcome on input value and allocation of revenue sources through the fair and consistent decision-making process. Her definition is also consistent with Murtaza et al (2011) whereby organizational justice is referred to as the perception that occurs within the employee towards fair treatment in the organization. Warsindah (2016) further mentioned that employees' perception also includes fair procedures and fair interaction within an organization. More specifically, organizational justice refers to resource allocation which includes acknowledgment, salary, and pay (Parker & Kohlmeyer, 2005). The concept of justice through equity can be understood from the following formula by Adams (1965).

$$\begin{array}{c} \mathbf{OP/IP=OA/IO} \text{ (equity)} \\ \mathbf{OP/IP>OA/IA} \text{ or } \mathbf{OP/IP<OA/IA} \text{ (inequality)} \\ \\ \mathbf{O} \text{ – Output} \\ \mathbf{P} \text{ – Employee} \\ \mathbf{A} \text{ – Other employee} \\ \mathbf{I} \text{ – Input} \end{array}$$

Figure 1. Theory of Equity Formula

Source: Adams (1965)

The formula suggests that employees are not only comparing the input and output between themselves and other employees but also making a comparison between the inputs that they put in versus the output that they gain. Inequality or injustice exists when the amount of output earned by an employee is different from another employee or when the amount of input is greater or lesser than the other employee (Adam, 1965). Based on Adam's theory, Greenberg (1987) developed the organizational justice model which consists of two dimensions namely procedural and distributive justice. The theory of organizational justice is a reflection of employee perceptions on the procedures, and the process of decision making (Jackson, Grove, & Beauchamp, 2010), which can affect employees' attitudes (Mohamed, 2014).

Past studies have revealed a positive and significant relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment (Manshor, 2016; Akanbi, 2013; Crow, 2012; Wiwiek & Sondakh, 2016). In specific, between procedural and distributive justice, and affective, normative, as well as continuous commitment (Gichira, 2016; Rahman et al., 2016; Rehman et al., 2015; Yazicioglu, 2009). The earlier concept of organizational commitment was introduced by Meyer and Allen (1997) whereby it consists of three components i.e. normative commitment, affective commitment, and continuous commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Allen, 1997). In brief, affective commitment refers to employees' emotions towards the organization (Raja, 2014). Continuous commitment is defined as employees' consciousness about the cost implications

which resulted from leaving the organization (Raja & Krishnan, 2014); Wolowska, 2014), whilst normative commitment refers to employees' inclination to continue working due to personal and organizational interest (Meyer & Allen, 1991). However, between the two dimensions of organizational justice, procedural justice appears to show a greater relationship with organizational commitment than distributive justice (Hwei, 2012; Ghafourian, 2014; Murtaza, 2011). The following section describes the research design of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the four objectives mentioned at the beginning of this article, this study has adopted a quantitative research design using a questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. This study referred to Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table in determining the sample required for a population of 120. Based on the table, the sampling size was 92, however, a total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to improve the response rate.

The questionnaire which consists of three parts was adapted from Yahya, M., Z. (2017). The first part collected demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age, and years of working experience; whilst the second part collected data on organizational justice which comprises distributive justice (Neihoff & Moorman, 1993) and procedural justice (Wiwiek & Sondakh, 2016). The third part collected data on organizational commitment consisting of affective commitment (Kaptein, 2009), continuous commitment (Khan et al., 2014), and normative commitment (Meyers & Allen, 1997).

Six points Likert scale were used, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 – Strongly Agree. Altogether, there were 5 items for distributive justice (e.g. My work schedule is fair), 9 items for procedural justice (e.g. The manager makes job decisions fairly), 7 items measuring affective commitment (e.g. I feel like I am part of this organization's family), 14 items for continuous commitment (e.g. I must consider several options before leaving this organization), and 7 items for normative commitment (e.g. I believe in the value of loyalty in an organization).

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In specific, the frequency and mean score analysis were used to investigate the level of organizational justice and organizational commitment. The mean score level was determined by using the following formula: $(\text{maximum score} - \text{minimum score}) / \text{level of scale}$. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were also performed to determine the relationship between the variables, as well as the dominant justice dimension that influences organizational commitment, respectively.

Overall, out of 120 questionnaires distributed, 83 were returned (69.2% response rate). Majority of the respondents were female (66.3 %), whereas the male respondents were 33.7%.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the questionnaire survey which has been analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Overall, the result shows that the level of organizational justice is high (average mean 4.23), whilst the level of organizational commitment is medium-high (average mean 4.08). The following Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation for organizational justice.

Table 1 Level of Distributive Justice and Procedural Justice

Distributive Justice		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fair Work Schedule	4.67	0.798
Fair Salary	4.06	1.162
Fair Workload	4.19	0.876
Fair Reward	4.28	0.979
Fair Responsibility	4.43	0.829
Total		4.36
Level of Distributive Justice		High
Procedural Justice		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Make Fair Decision	4.18	1.014
Clarify Decision	4.34	.887
Provide Additional Information	4.43	.886
Provide Accurate Information	4.20	1.045
Provide Complete Information	4.25	.986
Listen to Employee's Concerns	4.12	1.075
Use Decision Consistently	4.04	1.053
Allow Challenge of Decision	3.76	1.175
Allow Appeals to Decision	4.13	1.021
Total		4.09
Level of Procedural Justice		Medium-High

Based on the above table, we can conclude that the level of procedural justice is medium-high (average mean 4.09), whilst the level of distributive justice is high (average mean 4.36). The highest mean for procedural justice is for 'fair work schedule', and the lowest is for 'fair salary'. As for distributive justice, the highest mean is for 'clarify decision', whereby the lowest mean is for 'allow changes of decision'. These results suggest that the respondents perceived the distribution of yield is much fairer compared to the process involved in decision making.

The following Table 2 presents the results for the level of affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuous commitment. In summary, the level of normative commitment is high (average mean 4.19), the level of continuous commitment is medium-high (average mean 3.94), and the level of affective commitment is also medium-high (average mean 4.11). The item with the highest mean for affective commitment is 'happy working at organization', for continuous commitment is 'consider the option before leaving organization', and for normative commitment is 'employee must be responsible'. The result also shows that the respondents' normative commitment is higher than their affective and continuous commitment, which implies that the respondents inclined to continue working due to personal and organizational interest.

Table 2 Level of Affective Commitment, Continuous Commitment, and Normative Commitment

Affective Commitment		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Happy working at the organization	4.63	.879
Discuss the organization with public	3.75	1.114
Feel the organization's problems as own	3.60	1.023
Feel part of the organization	4.40	.764
Feel emotional attached to the organization	3.83	.922
Have personal meaning with organization	3.90	.970
Feel a sense of belonging with organization	4.12	1.041
Total		4.11
Level of Affective Commitment		Medium High

Continuous Commitment		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Worry about effects if leave organization	4.22	0.951
Difficult to leave the organization	3.20	1.091
Chaotic life if leave organization	3.05	0.923
Desire to stay at the organization	4.49	0.787
Lack of option if leave the organization	4.05	0.949
Lack of alternative if leave the organization	4.01	0.981
Continue working at the organization	4.53	0.801.
Stable life at the organization	4.34	0.914
Secure life at the organization	4.25	0.986
Necessary to stay at the organization	4.71	0.789
Consider option before leaving the organization	4.82	0.683
Difficult to leave the organization	4.10	0.932
Great sacrifice if leave the organization	4.25	1.010
Better benefits if stay at the organization	4.43	0.940
Total	3.94	
Level of Continuous Commitment	Medium High	
Normative Commitment		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
The employee must be loyal	4.13	1.079
The employee must be committed	4.99	0.707
The employee must be responsible	5.04	0.689
Not wrong to jump work	4.65	0.903
Not entitled to leave the organization	4.95	0.896
Belief in the value of loyalty	4.63	0.851
Yearn to be important personnel	4.64	0.742
The employee must permanently work at an organization	3.34	1.213
Total	4.19	
Level of Normative Commitment	High	

Besides that, the findings also revealed a positive and significant relationship (moderate strength) between organizational justice and organizational commitment ($r=0.394$, $p=0.000$), whereby distributive justice appeared to be the most dominant factor that influences organizational commitment ($\beta =0.432$, $p=0.000$). Table 3 below presents the correlation analysis result whereby Table 4 and 5 presents the regression analysis results.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis between Organizational Justice and Organizational Commitment

	Organizational Commitment	Affective Commitment	Normative Commitment	Continuous Commitment
Organizational Justice	.394**	-	-	-
Procedural Justice	-	.501**	.020	.243*
Distributive Justice	-	.495**	.243*	.375**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finally, to answer the fourth objective of this study, a multiple regression analysis was performed specifically to determine the most dominant organizational justice factor which influences organizational commitment. Based on Tables 4 below, it can be concluded that 21% of organizational commitment is explained by organizational justice, whereby distributive justice has the largest beta value of coefficient as compared to procedural justice. This analysis shows that distributive justice is the most important organizational justice component that influences employees' organizational commitment.

Table 4 Regression Analysis Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.454 ^a	.206	.187	11.64748

a. Predictors: (Constant), SUMPJ, SUMDJ

b. Dependent Variable: SUMOC

Moreover, the results presented in Table 5 suggest that distributive justice has the largest beta value of coefficient i.e. 0.432. It means that this variable makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable (organizational commitment). In addition, the significant value is less than 0.05, hence the contribution is considered as significant. The other variable however appears to be insignificant to organizational commitment. In sum, this analysis shows that distributive justice is the most important organizational justice component that influences employees' organizational commitment.

Table 5 The Dominant Factor Influencing Organisational Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	90.318	7.500		12.042	.000
	SUMDJ	1.418	.431	.432	3.287	.002
	SUMPJ	.054	.220	.033	.247	.805

In conclusion, this section has presented the results of the data analysis. The followings are the summary of the findings.

- a) The level of procedural justice is medium-high (average mean 4.09)
- b) The level of distributive justice is high (average mean 4.36)
- c) The level of organizational justice is high (average mean 4.23)
- d) The level of normative commitment is high (average mean 4.19)
- e) The level of continuous commitment is medium-high (average mean 3.94)
- f) The level of affective commitment is medium-high (average mean 4.11)
- g) The level of organizational commitment is medium-high (average mean 4.08)
- h) There is a positive and significant relationship (low strength) between distributive justice and normative commitment ($r=0.243$, $p=0.027$)
- i) There is a positive and significant relationship (moderate strength) between distributive justice and continuous commitment ($r=0.375$, $p=0.000$)
- j) There is a positive and significant relationship (strong strength) between distributive justice and affective commitment ($r=0.495$, $p=0.000$)
- k) There is a positive but insignificant relationship between procedural justice and normative commitment ($r=0.020$, $p=0.859$)
- l) There is a positive and significant relationship (low strength) between procedural justice and continuous commitment ($r=0.243$, $p=0.027$)
- m) There is a positive and significant relationship (strong strength) between procedural justice and affective commitment ($r=0.501$, $p=0.000$)
- n) There is a positive and significant relationship (moderate strength) between organizational justice and organizational commitment ($r=0.394$, $p=0.000$)
- o) Distributive justice is the most dominant factor that influences organizational commitment ($\beta =0.432$, $p=0.000$)

5. DISCUSSION

This study has achieved all the following four objectives - (i) the level of organizational justice, (ii) the level of organizational commitment, (iii) the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment, and (iv) the most dominant organizational justice dimension. The result of this study corroborates past studies. According to Parker & Kohlmeyer (2005), employees tend to view unfair distribution as a form of discrimination or ill-treatment by the organization. Besides unfair distribution, inconsistencies in the distribution are also seen as a form of discrimination and biased treatment (Daromes, 2006). These actions will then influence their attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Noe et.al, 2016).

In this study, the high level of distributive justice indicates that the institution practices a fair treatment and fair distribution of resources/rewards i.e. fair work schedule, fair salary, fair workload, fair reward, and fair responsibility. On the other hand, the medium-high level of procedural justice suggests that the employees perceived some amount of injustice towards the decision-making process made by the institution. The high and medium-high levels of organizational commitment shown in the finding section imply that the employees value the institution, and have a sense of responsibility towards the institution, however, they were not willing to be emotionally attached to the institution. As mentioned by Moncarz, Zhao & Kay (2009), only employees with a high level of affective commitment will show emotion and recognition towards the organization. Moreover, the result for continuous commitment level also suggests that probably the only factor that encouraged the employees to stay and continue working at the organization was the benefits offered by the organization. Based on Kahn et al. (2014), benefit entitlement is one of the reasons for employees to stay on at the organization.

As for the correlation analysis, the results of this study support the findings of previous studies such as by Gichira (2016), Qureshi and Frank (2016), and Manshor et al. (2016). The positive relationship between distributive justice and all the three components of organizational commitment is also consistent with past studies such as Gichira (2016) and Rahman et al. (2016). Interestingly, this study also found that distributive justice has a stronger correlation to affective commitment followed by continuous commitment and normative commitment. This suggests that employees would be more likely to feel attached to their organization when the organization practices fair distribution as this action satisfies their emotional and psychological needs (Hidayah, 2014, Raja, 2014). With regard to this study, 'fairness' refers to a fair work schedule, fair salary, fair workload, fair reward, and fair responsibility. On the flip side, when employees perceived unfairness in the distribution of rewards or punishment or inconsistencies in the distribution, they are likely to view this as a form of discrimination from the employer and are less likely to feel committed to the organization (Daromes, 2006).

The strong correlation was also found to be similar for procedural justice and affective commitment. Obviously, this shows that organizational justice (both distributive and procedural) has a higher linkage to affective commitment. Whilst distributive justice is concerned of the allocation and the distribution of resources (Seyyed Javadin & Farahi, 2008) i.e. work schedule, salary, workload, rewards, etc.; procedural justice, on the other hand, is the concern of how the allocation or the distribution was made (Rahman, Shahzad, Mustafa, Khan, & Qurashi, 2016), i.e. the policies, regulations, decision-making process. Based on this, the findings of this study suggest that the employees are more likely to feel emotionally attached to their organization when both of these components are satisfied as it signifies that the organization is trustable (Khan et.al, 2014).

Between the two components of organizational justice, this study has found that only distributive justice is significantly influencing organizational commitment. However, it is interesting to note that past studies have found a different result, whereby procedural justice has a greater impact compared to distributive justice (for example Ghafourian, 2014; Hwei & Santosa, 2012; Murtaza

et al., 2011). In specific, the study by Hwei (2012) proves that procedural justice shows a greater relationship to organizational commitment than distributive justice. In a different study, Ghafourian (2014) also found that procedural justice has a stronger impression than distributive justice towards organizational commitment. These findings appear to corroborate with Murtaza (2011) who found a stronger relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment versus distributive justice and organizational commitment.

The findings of this study however are different, probably because the results from the descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the average mean for distributive justice appears to be higher than for procedural justice. This implies that the employees are more satisfied towards the elements of distributive justice than the elements of procedural justice. Besides, the correlational analyses conducted also show that only distributive justice has a positive and significant relationship with every component of organizational commitment i.e. normative, affective, and continuous.

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcome or resource allocation i.e. rewards and punishment (Seyyed Javadin & Farahi, 2008), whilst procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of decision-making process used to determine outcomes (Rahman, Shahzad, Mustafa, Khan, & Qurashi, 2016). With regard to this study, it could be implied that the employees are more concerned about the outcome/results than on the process of making the outcome/results. This may be because the employees have little control or involvement in the decision-making process or do not foresee their future involvement in the process, and thus their perceived commitment is made primarily based on their perceived fairness of the resource allocation (distributive justice) than on the decision-making process (procedural justice). It is thus suggested that the organization improves its human resource practices particularly in the procedural justice aspect in order to increase the employees' commitment towards the organization. This includes making fair and consistent decisions, providing additional, accurate, and complete information to the employees, as well as providing avenues for employees to challenge, appeal, and clarify the decisions that have been made.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, although past studies have shown evidence that organizational commitment can be influenced by organizational justice (for example Syahnasthalia, Sari & Hanif, 2015; Kim, 2009; Kaul, 2017; Wiwiek & Sondakh, 2016; Gichira, 2016; Zia-ur-Rehman et al., 2003) this study has further explored the relationship between each component of organizational justice with every component of organizational commitment. The results indicate that not all components of organizational justice have a positive and significant linkage towards organizational commitment, in specific between procedural justice and normative commitment. However, this study is confined to the responses of the participants, and thus the findings cannot be generalized into other educational institutions. Moreover, as the result has shown, only 21% of the respondents' organizational commitment is influenced by organizational justice. Hence future researchers may want to explore other variables that may contribute to the employees' commitment towards their organization.

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