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Organizational Justice Initiative and the Behavioral School of Thought

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Abstract: **This paper chronicles the concept of organizational justice initiative in management theories and practice. Extant literatures were reviewed and outcomes compared with the objectives of the pioneers of management thinkers and philosophers (the behavioral school of thought). The paper observed that the concept of organizational justice which delineates fair treatment at work is timely and deeply rooted in the argument of the behavioral school of thought . The behavioral school of thought is being guided to a very large extent the processes of industrial psychology and sociological analysis of behavior. The paper concludes that social actions and interactions such as perceived fair treatment determine behavior at the workplace which is greatly responsible for all the organization outcomes including performance and organizational citizen behavior.**

Keywords: **Organizational justice, Distributive justice, Behavioral school of thought, Procedural justice.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Justice is an important construct in nearly every aspect of an individual's life. Employees do not want to feel taken advantage of or cheated; therefore, the importance of an employee's perceptions of being treated fairly should not be overlooked or dismissed by organizations and leaders. In recent past, the notion of fairness, or justice, has become an increasingly visible construct in the social sciences (Colquitt, 2001). According to Colquitt et al. (2001), justice in organizational settings can be described as focusing on the antecedents and consequences of two types of subjective perceptions: (a) the fairness of outcome distributions or allocations and (b) the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcome distributions or allocations, with the former being referred to as distributive justice and the latter known as procedural justice.

Individuals have subjective perception(s) of justice in that, what one individual views as fair may not be deemed fair or just by another individual. The important question is: If an injustice is perceived, how will the individual respond? Greenberg, (as cited in Tepper & Taylor, 2003) noted that "perceived injustices produce a range of responses including psychological distress, sabotage, and withdrawal, and/or an employee may withhold voluntary behaviors (e. g., extra-role or citizenship behaviors) to adjust his/her input in an attempt to correct the perceived inequity (Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002). Tepper and Taylor (2003) reported that, the treatment supervisors experience trickles down to their subordinates, influencing their fairness perceptions and their willingness to perform actions that contribute to organizational effectiveness.

According to Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000) there is substantial evidence that fairness is an important dimension affecting employees' actions and reactions within organizations. Thus, scholars have studied justice because of the belief that improved fairness perceptions also improved outcomes relevant to organizations, including but not limited to: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Colquitt, 2001). Furthermore, Moorman (1991) purported that, "if employees believe they are treated fairly, they will be more likely to hold positive attitudes about their work, their work outcomes, and their supervisors and are also more likely to engage in prosocial or organizational citizenship behaviors.

Since its introduction, researchers have studied organizational justice from many different frameworks, theories, models, and perspectives in an attempt to find the best conceptualization for it. According to Colquitt (2001), researchers studied organizational justice in its infancy by using the two-factor model of organizational justice endorsed by Folger and Konovsky (1989), Greenberg (1990b), Lind and Tyler (1988), McFarlin and Sweeney (1992), and Sweeney and McFarlin (1993). The two-factor conceptualization consists of distributive justice (e.g., person-referenced outcomes like pay satisfaction) and procedural justice (e.g., organizational referenced outcomes like organizational commitment).

Researchers began to question this two-factor model of organizational justice in 1986 when Bies and Moag hypothesized about a third factor, termed interactional justice, which is concerned with the interpersonal treatment people receive as procedures are enacted. While some researchers considered interactional justice to be part of procedural justice (Moorman, 1991; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Tyler & Bies, 1990), the introduction of interactional justice led some researchers (e.g., Aquino, 1995) to adopt a three-factor model. The importance of interactional justice became increasingly apparent as researchers (Malatesta & Byme, 1997; Masterson & Taylor, 1996) found that interactional justice perceptions predicted outcomes relevant to the supervisor and positively related to employee commitment and citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor.

Further complicating the organizational justice construct was the introduction of a four-factor model by Greenberg (1993), who suggested that an additional factor related to sensitivity and explanation was involved. In this model, he hypothesized that the "respect and sensitivity aspects of interactional justice might best be viewed as interpersonal facets of distributive justice because they alter reactions to decision outcomes (e.g., sensitivity can make people feel better about an unfavorable outcome)" (Colquitt, 2001). While the "explanation aspect of interactional justice might best be viewed as an interpersonal facet of procedural justice because explanations often provide the information needed to evaluate structural aspects of the procedure" (Colquitt, 2001), Greenberg's (1993) model went untested for nearly a decade until Colquitt (2001) began to study it.

While debate surrounding the dimensions of organizational justice persists, researchers commonly accept that justice is evaluated based on the behavior(s) of two sources: the organization and the leader (Colquitt, 2001). Cobb, Folger, and Wooten (1995) noted that, when leaders are seen as acting fairly, followers are more likely to emulate that behavior in their dealings with others. They also theorized that, when leaders often personify the organization for many of their followers, subordinates are likely to assess their value to the organization by the treatment they receive from them. Furthermore, Masterson (2000), believed that the literature suggested that justice perceptions are important inputs into employees' judgments of the quality of their exchange relationship with their supervisors and organizations, and employees perceive acts of fairness to be contributions that enhance the quality and desirability of their ongoing relationships. Organizational justice researchers have explored many of the relationships that exist between justice and various behavioral outcomes of importance to the organization.

These behavioral outcomes has identified the relevancy of the concept of organizational justice to the behavioral school of thought in management in management sciences. The next section gives a brief introduction of the behavioral school of thought, thereafter dimensions and indicators of organizational justice are identified, recent studies discussed and ended with a conclusion

2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE BEHAVIORAL SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

During practically the same period that Taylor, Fayol, and others were concentrating on scientific management and the manager's tasks, many scholars and practitioners were thinking about, experimenting with, and writing on industrial psychology and social theory.

Foremost among these scholars is Hugo Mintzberg. In his first work published in 1912, mintzberg made it clear that his objectives were to discover ;1) how to find people whose mental qualities best fit them for the work they are to do, 2) under what psychological conditions the greatest and most satisfactory output can be obtained from the work of every person and 3) how a business can influence workers in such a way as to obtain the best positive result from them. He stressed that his approach is strongly aimed at workers and through it he hoped to reduce their working time , increase their wages, and raise their level of quality of work life.

In part preceeding and in large part concurrent with the development of scientific management by Taylor and Administrative management by Fayol , a considerable amount of thinking and research was been devoted to observing

people as products of good behavior. This is sometimes called the social man approach to management . A contributor to this management approach was Emile Durkheim. In his doctorial dissertation he emphasized that groups, by establishing their values and norms, control human conduct in any organization.

Vilfredo Pareto is another management thinker, who in a series of lectures and books earned the right to be called the father of social system approach to organization and management. Pareto viewed society as an intricate cluster of interdependent units, or element. That is as a social system with many sub system. Among his many ideas was the tendency of social system to seek equilibrium upon being disturbed by outside and or inside influence. His thesis was that social attitudes, or sentiments, function to cause the system to seek equilibrium when disturbed.

Organizational justice initiatives is a concept that revolved in between the social equilibrium. This is the reason why the best base line theory more relevant to this concept is the social exchange theory. In the next section we explain the social exchange theory in relation to the studies on organizational justice.

3. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory has been widely used as a primary lens to explain how organizational justice perceptions influence work-related outcomes (Cho & Sai, 2012;Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). Social exchange is defined as voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others (Blau, 1964). Specifically, the central tenet of the theory is that the norm of reciprocity inherent in social exchange relationships encourages individuals to feel the need to repay those who have helped them (Blau, 1964; Scott & Colquitt, 2007).

Given that employees regard fair treatment from their organization or managers as a benefit deserving reciprocation, the concepts of social exchange can be applied to predict the way in which organizational justice affects employee turnover. Because fair treatment indicates the extent to which their organizations and managers value their employees' work efforts, employees are less likely to leave the organization (Choi, 2011; Hassan, 2013). To be specific, when employees perceive that they are treated fairly in terms of outcome distributions, the administrative procedures by which those outcomes are allocated, and interpersonal elements of exchange, they repay the fair treatment by remaining loyal and continuing to work in their current organizations (Bal, de Lange, Ybema, Jansen, & Van der Velde, 2011). In contrast, if employees are treated unfairly, the norm of reciprocity is harmed (Colquitt, 2005). In such context, it is possible that perceived injustice undermines employees' beliefs in the benefits of the exchange relationship with the organization and managers; based on this perception, employees might consider leaving the organization.

Organizational justice also enhances employees' feelings of obligation to their organization in the form of improved performance. For instance, fair distribution of outcomes incites employees to fulfill a contractual agreement that characterizes their exchange relationships (Scott & Colquitt, 2007). Performance is generally viewed as a critical responsibility that employees are hired to perform in exchange for extrinsic rewards (Colquitt, 2005). Thus, it seems reasonable to predict that public employees who feel underpaid will make fewer contributions to the organization.

In the next section we highlight the interactions of organizational justice in organizational behavior outcomes supporting with relevant empirical studies.

4. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICES AND THE BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

1. Fairness perception improves outcomes relevant to organization, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance (see colquit, 2005.)

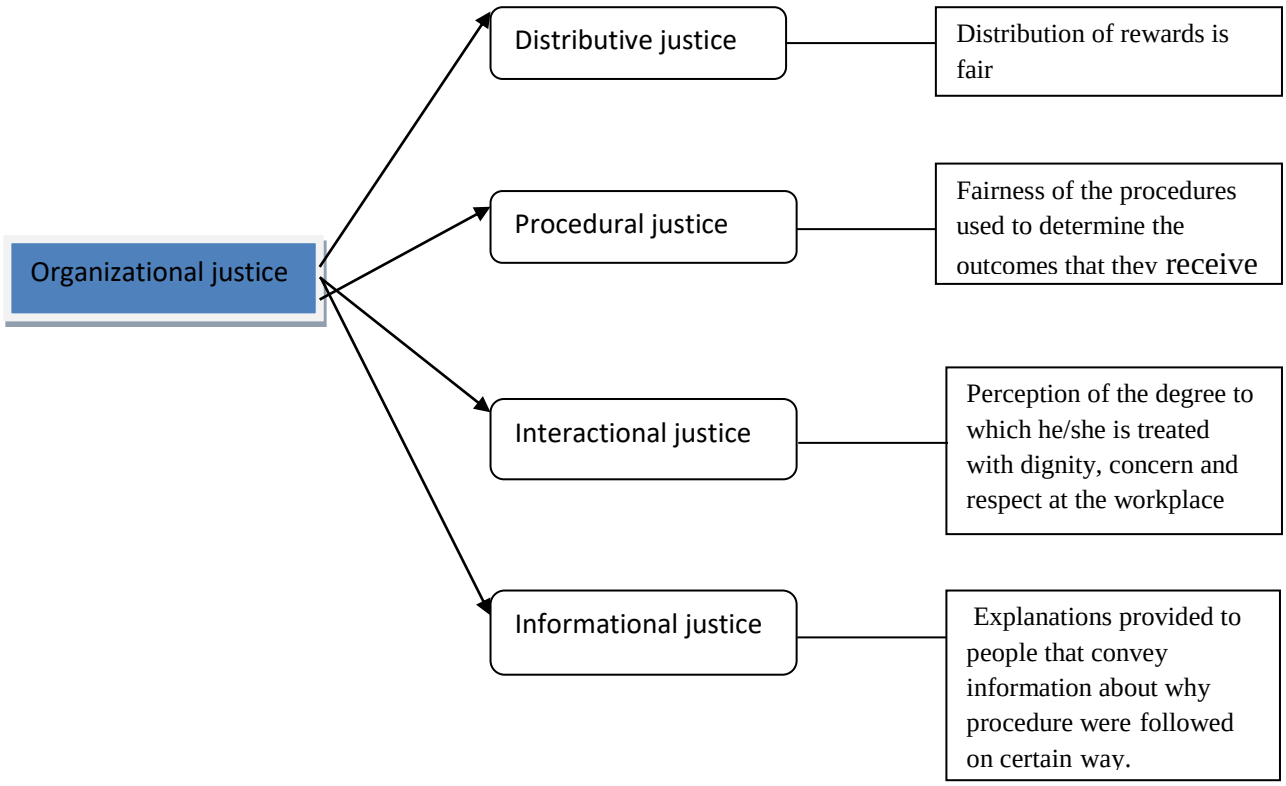
2. Perceived injustice produce a range of responses including psychological distress, sabotage, and withdrawal and may withhold voluntary behavior

3. if employees are treated fairly, they will be more likely to hold positive attitude about their work and their work outcomes.

4. Supervisors are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior and organizational citizen behavior

In the next section we provide the dimensions and indicators of organizational justice

5. CONCEPT DIMENSIONS INDICATORS



Source; Researcher,s Desk (2019)

Fig. 1 Dimensions and indicators of Organizational Justice

A large number of authors has examined various dimensions of organizational justice, leading to a total of five dimensions, including distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997).

Distributive justice refers to an employee's perceived fairness regarding the distribution of rewards amongst his/her peers. This was largely based upon the notion of equity theory, which used social exchange theory to evaluate the fairness (Adams, 1965).

Procedural justice, on other hand, refers to the perceptions of employees about the fairness of the procedures used to determine the outcomes that they receive. Thibaut and Walker (1975) introduced the concept of procedural justice to highlight disputant reactions to legal procedures. In this field, much work has been conducted by Leventhal and his colleagues in organizational settings (Leventhal, 1980).

Interactional/interpersonal Justice refers to employee's perception of the degree to which he/she is treated with dignity, concern and respect at the workplace. Bies and Moag (1986) first introduced this concept focusing on interpersonal treatment. Interpersonal treatment has since been categorized further into namely interpersonal justice and informational justice (Greenberg, 1990,). Interpersonal justice describes the degree to which people are treated with graciousness, degree and respect.

Informational justice, on other hand, refers to explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedure were followed on certain way and why rewards are distributed in particular manner (Colquitt, 2001).

Researchers have studied organizational justice as an antecedent and explored its impact on, for example, satisfaction and trust in Nigeria (Agarwal, 2014). A majority of studies from South Asia focus upon the justice tripartite, i.e. procedural, distributive, and interactional justices, and outcomes, such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Researchers have argued that oftentimes selection of these outcomes does not incorporate all organizational aspects thus offer findings that are limited in scope (Aryee, 2002).

6. EMPIRICAL REVIEW ON ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

Mene (2018), empirically examined the relationship between organizational justice and workplace boredom in five insurance firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The findings revealed that there is a significant and negative relationship between the dimensions of organizational justice and the measures of workplace boredom; also, organizational climate is revealed to significantly moderate the relationship between organizational justice and workplace boredom. It was therefore concluded that the evidence of organizational justice was imperative to reducing workplace boredom. Therefore, it was recommended that management of insurance firms design employment terms that are internally commensurate with employee's efforts and externally competitive, and that heads and managers of insurance firms should first improve the work procedures and hence increase overall levels of perceived justice by involving employees in the procedures used in making decisions and allocating rewards, finally, Management should also pursue fair policies which reflect equity and justice in the management and control of the workplace as this plays a crucial role in workers perceptions and views about the organization.

Markely (2001) reported findings of the 2001 Aventis (Canadian) Healthcare Survey which stated that thirty-one percent of those who reported illness related to workplace stress also said that they took six or more days off in the last year. In another study, procedural and relational justices were significantly associated with both self-certified and medically-certified sickness absences (Elovainio, Kivimaki, & Vahtera, 2002). Specifically, Elovainio (2002) surveyed 4076 hospital employees (506 men and 3570 women) in 1 of the 23 health care districts in Finland using self-report measures of procedural and relational justices as well as self-rated health, minor psychiatric morbidity, and recorded absence due to sickness. Odds ratios of regression analyses indicated that employee absenteeism is affected by employees' perceptions of fairness in decision-making procedures as well as their perceptions of polite, considerate, and fair interpersonal treatment (Elovainio, 2002). Specifically, absence rates among employees who perceived low justice were 1.2 to 1.9 times higher than among employees who perceived high justice. One notable point is that relational justice was a stronger predictor of sickness absence for men than for women. This finding may be due to gender-related occupations and differences in perceived justices between occupational positions.

Rai (2014) examine Organizational Justice and Employee mental health's moderating roles in organizational identification. The purpose of the paper was to test the impact of organizational justice on employees' mental health. The paper was also an attempt to understand the moderating role of organizational identification on organizational justice and employee mental health. Standard questionnaires were used to collect data. A survey study was conducted in two multinational companies located in northern and southern part of Nigeria. The sample size of the study was 321.The result of hierarchical regression highlights that distributive and interactional justice were significantly correlated with employee mental health with positive interaction effect in the case of strong identification. Moderating effect of organizational identification on mental health and organizational justice was also found significant. The moderating effect of organizational identification will bring a new dimension to understand the relationship of organizational justice and mental health. This study provided insight into practicing manager to reinforce organizational justice practices at workplace. This will also help manager and leader to understand the identification level of employee with organization, and its impact on mental health.

7. CONCLUSION

Justice is an important construct in nearly every aspect of an individual's life. Employees do not want to feel taken advantage of or cheated; therefore, the importance of an employee's perceptions of being treated fairly should not be overlooked or dismissed by organizations and leaders.

Organizational justice has emerged as one of the most important concepts in management research. As a result, many studies have been dedicated to highlighting its impact on employee perceptions and workplace expectations, primarily focused upon delineating the role of fairness and its impact on employee commitment, attitudes, and behaviors. Therefore, the paper concludes that social actions and interactions such as perceived justice or injustice is greatly determined by the behavior of individuals at work.

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