

Organizational Justice: Typology, Antecedents and Consequences

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Organizational Justice is an individual's perception that events, actions, or decisions within an organization adhere to a standard of fairness. Justice researchers have categorized justice into four types, differentiated by how fairness is evaluated by employees: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. Organizational justice perceptions have consequences for the employee and the organization: increasing job satisfaction, commitment, and trust; and decreasing turnover, counterproductive work behaviors, and even workplace violence. Contemporary organizational justice research seeks to understand how to restore justice after an injustice has occurred.

Keywords: organizational justice ; distributive justice ; procedural justice ; interactional justice ; interpersonal justice ; informational justice ; deontic justice ; fairness ; restorative justice

Justice, as it is broadly defined, is present when a person evaluates something as fair or unfair ^[1]. Organizational Justice is an individual's perception that events, actions, or decisions within an organization adhere to a standard of fairness ^[2]. Critically, organizational justice is a subjective perception, evaluated by the employee, the manager/supervisor, and others in the workplace (i.e., third party observers). Researchers refer to such perceptions and evaluations as justice judgements ^[3]; observers form justice judgements using the information and cues they observe in the organization, together with their emotional responses to these events ^[2]. Justice researchers have categorized justice into four types, which are differentiated by how fairness is evaluated by employees: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice ^[4]. These justice judgements link to employee affect, attitudes, and behavior ^[4], and aggregate to impact both team- and organization-level outcomes ^[5]. Unlike moral concerns, fairness considerations tend to be ubiquitous across cultures, and the four key types of justice generally hold cross-culturally ^[6]. As such, organizational justice is an important consideration for organizations and their stakeholders ^[7].

It may seem obvious that employees care about justice, but research underscores that justice perceptions are more than short-term, self-interested concerns. Rather, justice perceptions reflect a long-term concern for both the self and others ^[7] ^[8] ^[9]. As humans, the desire to be accepted by important others drives us to act in ways that prompt reciprocal acts of fairness ^[10]. Concern for reciprocity is future focused. Employees consider long-term benefits when they evaluate how an organization treats them, with a desire to reduce future uncertainty by evaluating justice events in the present. Observing (in)justice toward others offers information about how employees themselves can expect to be treated within the organization. Moreover, when employees witness injustice directed at others, they may have negative emotional and cognitive responses and may retaliate against the organization or responsible party ^[11].

Organizations and managers also care about justice, as its impact goes far beyond the individual employee. Whether or not they were the target, witnessing injustice at work makes employees more likely to act in retribution, even at personal cost ^[9] ^[11] ^[12] ^[13]. When employees agree that the workplace is not just (low justice climate), absenteeism is higher and performance is lower ^[14] ^[15]. By contrast, employees who perceive workplace justice express greater trust in and commitment to the organization, are more likely to adhere to company policies, and exhibit greater conscientiousness and job effectiveness ^[7] ^[9] ^[16]. Overall, workplaces that are perceived to be just are viewed as more legitimate organizations ^[17].

Employee identities, personalities, and values can influence their justice judgements (e.g., ^[18] ^[19]). For example, Lee and Farh ^[20] show that women may be more attentive to distributive justice around salary given the history of gendered pay inequity between men and women. Individual differences among managers, such as empathy, personality traits, moral motives, and workload, can also influence employee justice perceptions ^[21] ^[22]. Mayer and colleagues ^[23] found employees supervised by neurotic managers tend to have lower perceptions of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice climate. When researchers measured the daily workload of managers, they observed that managers

with higher workloads were less likely to prioritize acting justly over other responsibilities ^[24]. Encouragingly, when managers included justice tasks on lists of daily duties, they showed greater adherence to justice rules.

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