Perceived Organizational Justice and Employee Performance: Trust as A Mediator

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the extent to which perceived organizational justice influences employee performance. The relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance is mediated primarily by trust. Empirical evidence from this study provides insights into the findings of Gerstner, Whetstone, and Zhang (1995) that illustrate organizational justice as an important factor in both organizations' profitability and employees' well-being. The study is conducted by collecting responses from 165 employees working in 5 leading IT firms in Pune City. Perceived organizational justice, employee performance, and trust are measured using Likert-based Behavior-Related Measurement System (BRMS) and Interpersonal trust scale, respectively. It is found that those who work longer with the same organization show higher trust and are more likely to perceive it as just, thus being able to perform better. Age and perceived organizational justice are not significantly correlated according to the findings. This research illustrates the importance of organizations' well-being, as well as employees' well-being, to the success of an organization. Moreover, this study shows that individuals with low levels of work-related trust are less satisfied in their job and are not productive at work compared to those who have high levels of work-related trust.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Mediator, Organizational Justice, Simple Mediation Model, Trust

INTRODUCTION

Organizational justice has gained importance in the past decade, with many scholars (Greenberg & Folger, 2008; Colquitt et al., 2001) reporting its importance in both organizations' profitability and employees' well-being. Organizational justice refers to ensuring fairness in every outcome related to people in the organizations (Colquitt et al., 2001). Justice perceptions, when combined with organizational commitment, have been shown to increase employees' commitment and job satisfaction. Organizational justice has also been shown to predict positive emotions and behaviour outcomes as well as positive self-esteem among employees.

In addition, work related trust has also been shown to have an important role in organizations' outcomes. Emotional stability and work satisfaction was higher among employees with high level trust (Colquitt, 2001).

Organizational justice and higher trust in organizations have been cited as major motivators of organizational performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). In the same vein, it has been shown that organizations can also benefit from employees' well-being as a result of higher levels of trust in the organization (Colquitt, 2001). The relationship between perceived organizational justice and trust

appeared to be a particularly promising area for research. To date, however, study has focused on employee attitudes towards their organization and work-related attitudes towards their supervisor (Hakeem & Belardi, 2004; Wehlage et al., 2005; Mangubhai et al., 2010; Whetstone et al. 2008) in relation to justice and trust. This study is the first study to focus on the interrelation between the redressal of injustices and trust in an Indian context.

The extent to which perceived organizational fairness affects employee performance is investigated in this study. The relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance is mediated primarily by trust. Empirical evidence from this study provides insights into the findings of Gerstner, Whetstone, and Zhang (1995) that illustrate organizational justice as an important factor in both organizations' profitability and employees' well-being.

The structure of this article is described as follows: Firstly, there is an overview of the related literature. The subsequent section includes detail of the design and methodology of the study, with an analysis of the data and findings to follow. Finally, a brief summary of the study is provided in the conclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Perceived organisational justice and employee performance

The concept of perceived organizational justice has been widely researched in the context of employee performance. According to Baldwin (2006), perceptions can influence attitudes and behaviors, which in turn, affect employee performance and organizational success. Three types of justice have been identified: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Baldwin, 2006). Factors such as leader behavior, work group structure, and dimensions of job content have been found to influence employees' perceptions of injustice in organizations (Colquitt et al., 2001). Eby et al. (2003) found that distributive justice had both a direct and indirect effect on an employee's performance at work. Mangubhai et al. (2010) confirmed the negative-feedback loop relationship between distributive justice and employee performance in organizational contexts. Cropanzano et al. (2007) argued that implementing a strong organizational justice program can develop an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, leading to improved job performance and a reduction in disagreements. Furthermore, Ndjaboué et al. (2012) found that mental health is associated with procedural and relational justice, while Swalhi et al. (2017) showed that a firm's success is directly linked to employee performance and behavior, which are affected by organizational justice perceptions. Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) concluded that job performance is influenced directly and indirectly by the job environment and management support, while Hermanto and Srimulyani (2022) found that employee performance at the workplace is greatly affected by their perception of organizational justice. Therefore, H1 can be formulated as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance.

Trust as a Mediator

The literature on organizational justice and trust has consistently shown that employees' perceptions of organizational justice are strongly linked to their trust in their supervisors and the organization. Leaders who are perceived to be dishonest are unlikely to obtain the loyalty of their employees, as they are likely to take advantage of them (Robbins, et al., 2008). Individuals have an expectation of trust in an organization and its leadership based on feelings of connectedness and sacredness (Darcy, 2010). Developing trust is essential to resolving conflicts, committing to goals, achieving collective objectives, and holding each other accountable (Lencioni, 2005). Aryee et al. (2002) found that distributive, procedural, and interactional organizational justice are positively related to organizational trust. Trust, in turn, has been found to be linked to employee commitment, loyalty, and a good working relationship with their supervisors (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Furthermore, the relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance has been described as a negative feedback loop, mediated by trust (Eby et al., 2003; Wehlage et al., 2005). Eby et al. (2003) found that the relationship between distributive justice and employee performance

was mediated by trust. In addition, the relationship between organizational justice and employee turnover has been well-established (Bienstock et al., 2000; Eby et al., 2003; Wehlage et al., 2005), with Eby et al. (2003) finding that the relationship between distributive justice and turnover was also mediated by trust.

The major contribution of Eby et al. (2003) was in establishing the causal nature of the effect of distributive justice on voluntary turnover intentions, mediated by trust. Based on the literature reviewed, it can be hypothesized that trust plays a mediating role between perceived organizational justice and employee performance. Therefore, H2 can be formulated as follows:

H2: Trust mediates the relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance.

Organizational trust and work experience and Age and perceived organizational justice

According to Bidarian and Jafari (2012), perceived organizational justice is related to work experience. Furthermore, Tenhiälä et al. (2013) found that the relationship between long sickness absences and perceptions of procedural justice is moderated by age. In terms of gender, Mensah et al. (2016) noted that the relationship between organizational justice and commitment is significantly influenced by gender. Meanwhile, Zeffane (2018) found that work experience is a factor that impacts one's ability to trust, but to a lesser degree than age. Therefore, H3 and H4 can be formulated as follows:

H3: A positive correlation exists between organizational trust and work experience.

H4: A positive correlation exists between age and perceived organizational justice.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1. To examine the relationship between perceived organizational justice and employee performance.
- 2. To examine the role of trust as a mediator of this relationship.
- 3. To study if any correlation exists between organizational trust and work experience.
- 4. To study whether any correlation exists between age and organizational justice.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

This study used a cross-sectional survey design. A total of 165 employees working in 5 leading IT firms in Pune City participated in the study. The respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (a) all employees are permanent, salaried employees; (b) all employees are between 18 to 60 years of age, and (c) each worked for at least 6 months in their current organization.

Study Period: June 2022 to September 2022.

Scope of the study: The study was conducted in only 5 IT firms which may not be indicative of the general population. Secondly, the study was cross-sectional in nature, meaning that data was collected at a single point in time. As a result, it is not possible to establish causal relationships between the variables studied. Therefore, further research using longitudinal designs is needed to establish the causal relationships between organizational justice, trust, and employee performance. Lastly, the study is inclusive of all types of organizational justice to different extents but does not specifically focus on any one type (i.e., distributive, procedural, or interactional). These types of justice may have different effects on employee performance. Therefore, future research may consider focusing on specific types of justice and examining their effects on employee performance.

Independent Variables: Perceived Trust has measured by a specially designed scale which was based on 13 points. Perceived organizational justice had specifically designed 18 items which were presented in a separate section of the questionnaire.

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance was measured using a specially designed performance scale. The scale was a 10-item section of the questionnaire with a 5-point Likert format on a scale of agreement.

Statistical Analysis: Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analysis, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.0, were used to analyze the data. The Andrew Hayes plugin was also used to find whether trust has a mediating role to play between the dependent and the independent variable.

Questionnaire Design: The questionnaire was designed accordingly to meet research objectives. Both the concepts of perceived organizational justice and trust were employed in the questionnaire to test the hypotheses. Employees were asked to fill out the BRMS which measured both, employee performance (perception) and behaviors (trust). The survey was conducted online using an online survey tool, Google Forms. An enterprise-wide email network was used to circulate the link to the questionnaire and informal social groups like WhatsApp were also used to circulate the questionnaires among the employees.

DATA ANALYSIS

To check the internal validity of the scales that were prepared in the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated which were as follows:

Table 1. Internal Validity Measures

Sr. No	Item	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Perceived Trust	13	0.864
2	Perceived organizational justice	18	0.783
3	Employee Performance	10	0.771

As shown in table 1, Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, which indicates how well the items in a scale are related to one another. Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable for research purposes. As stated in the above table, all three variables have Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.771 or higher, indicating that the scales used to measure the variables were reliable and valid. This means that the items within each scale were consistent and accurately measured the intended variables. Overall, this table provides important information about the reliability and validity of the scales used in the study.

Table 2: Age * Gender Cross tabulation (Demographic Information)

			Gender		
			Male	Female	Total
Age	18-25 years	Count	8	17	25
		% within Gender	7.0%	33.3%	15.2%
	26-35 years	Count	24	25	49
		% within Gender	21.1%	49.0%	29.7%
	36-45 years	Count	58	9	67
		% within Gender	50.9%	17.6%	40.6%
	46-55 years	Count	24	0	24
		% within Gender	21.1%	0.0%	14.5%
Total		Count	114	51	165
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The above table (2) provides information on the distribution of participants by gender and age group. It shows that among the male participants, the highest number belonged to the age group of 36-45 years (50.9%), followed by 26-35 years (21.1%). Among female participants, the highest number belonged to

the age group of 26-35 years (49.0%), followed by 36-45 years (17.6%). The table also includes the total number of participants in each age and gender category, as well as the percentage of participants within each category.

Table 3: Total Industry Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0-2 years	17	10.3	10.3	10.3
	3-5 years	24	14.5	14.5	24.8
Valid	6-10 years	29	17.6	17.6	42.4
	Over 10 years.	95	57.6	57.6	100.0
	Total	165	100.0	100.0	_

As shown in the table 3 it provides information about the total industry experience of the respondents. Out of the 165 respondents, the majority (57.6%) had an experience of over 10 years, while 17.6% had an experience of 6 to 10 years. 14.5% of respondents had an experience of 3 to 5 years and 10.3% had an experience of 0 to 2 years. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents have considerable industry experience, with a majority having more than 10 years of experience.

Table 4: Total Experience in the Current Organization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-2 years	49	29.7	29.7	29.7
	3-5 years	12	7.3	7.3	37.0
	6-10 years	33	20.0	20.0	57.0
	Over 10 years.	71	43.0	43.0	100.0
	Total	165	100.0	100.0	

According to the table 4, 43% of the respondents had experience of over 10 years within the same organization. The industry under consideration was the IT industry where the employees are expected to have job changes from time to time. 20% of the respondents had experience in the same organization of 6 to 10 years whereas 29.7% of the respondents had an experience of 0 to 2 years in the same organization.

The next set of tables shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and the role of a mediating variable.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects

Model: (Simple Mediation Model)						
Y: Employee Performance						
X: Perceived Organizational	-					
Justice						
M: Perceived Trust						
Andrew Hayes plugin						
Direct effect of X on Y	(POJ on EP)					

0.0413

0.1513

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Effect	BootSE	t	р	LLCI	ULCI
0.3589	0.526	6.81	0	0	0.4628
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:					
	Effect	BootSE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULC	CI

0.0783

The table 5 as shown above reports two types of effects: direct and indirect. The direct effect of X on Y (i.e., the effect of Perceived Organizational Justice on Employee Performance) is significant with an effect size of 0.3589, a BootSE of 0.526, and a p-value of 0. The 95% confidence interval (CI) of the direct effect (from LLCI to ULCI) ranges from 0 to 0.4628. The bootSE gives us an idea of how much the direct effect estimate (0.3589) can vary if we were to collect a different sample of data from the same population. The smaller the bootSE value, the more precise the estimate. The 95% confidence interval (CI) is a range of values that is likely to contain the true value of the parameter being estimated. In this case, the parameter is the direct effect of perceived organizational justice on employee performance. The lower limit of the CI is called LLCI (Lower Limit of Confidence Interval), and the upper limit is called ULCI (Upper Limit of Confidence Interval). The CI for the direct effect of perceived organizational justice on employee performance ranges from 0 to 0.4628. This means that we can be 95% confident that the true effect size lies between these two values. In other words, if the study was repeated many times, we would expect the direct effect of perceived organizational justice on employee performance to fall within this range in 95% of the replications.

0.2411

The indirect effect of X on Y through the mediator (Perceived Trust) is also reported in the table. The indirect effect is significant with an effect size of 0.1513, a BootSE of 0.0413, and a Boot LLCI of 0.0783, and a Boot ULCI of 0.2411. The BootSE (Bootstrap Standard Error) of the indirect effect is 0.0413, which indicates the precision of the estimation. The Boot LLCI (Bootstrap Lower Limit of the Confidence Interval) of the indirect effect is 0.0783, which means that there is a 95% probability that the true value of the indirect effect falls within this range or higher. The Boot ULCI (Bootstrap Upper Limit of the Confidence Interval) of the indirect effect is 0.2411, which means that there is a 95% probability that the true value of the indirect effect falls within this range or lower. In other words, the indirect effect is statistically significant and the confidence interval suggests that the true value of the indirect effect lies somewhere between 0.0783 and 0.2411. This indicates that there is a moderate positive effect of Perceived Organizational Justice on Employee Performance that is mediated by Perceived Trust, and this effect is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant mediation effect of Perceived Trust in the relationship between Perceived Organizational Justice and Employee Performance.

In summary, the table provides evidence that there is a significant direct effect of Perceived Organizational Justice on Employee Performance and a significant indirect effect of Perceived Organizational Justice on Employee Performance through the mediator variable Perceived Trust.

Table 6. Correlation Between Work Experience and Perceived Trust

		Total Industry Experience	Total Experience in the current organization
Perceived	Pearson Correlation	.578**	.434**
Trust			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	165	165

Table 6 as shown above displays the correlation coefficients between perceived trust and two variables: total industry experience and total experience in the current organization. The correlation coefficient between perceived trust and total industry experience is .578 (significant at p < .01), indicating a moderate positive correlation. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between perceived trust and total experience in the current organization is .434 (significant at p < .01), indicating a positive correlation but a weaker relationship than perceived trust and total industry experience. The sample size for both correlations is 165, suggesting a robust statistical result. Overall, the table suggests that work experience is positively associated with perceived trust.

Table 7. Correlation Between Age and Perceived Organisational Justice

Correlations

		Perc_org_justice	Age
Perc_org_justice	Pearson Correlation	1	.110
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.160
	N	165	165
Age	Pearson Correlation	.110	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.160	
	N	165	165

The table 7 shows the correlation between age and perceived organizational justice. The Pearson correlation coefficient for age and perceived organizational justice is 0.110, which indicates a weak positive correlation between the two variables. However, the P value is 0.160, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is not statistically significant. This means that there is no evidence to suggest that age is related to perceived organizational justice. The same weak positive correlation is also observed between perceived organizational justice and age, but it is not statistically significant either.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The first hypothesis(H1) of the study found that when employees feel that their organization is fair and treats them well, they are more motivated and perform better. In other words, when employees believe that their employer is treating them justly, they work harder and achieve better results. The finding that employees perform better when they feel that their organization treats them fairly and well is consistent with real trends in the IT industry. As rightly stated by Guha, S., & Chakrabarti, S. (2014) IT industry is known for its high levels of competition and fast-paced environment, which can lead to employee burnout and turnover if employees do not feel valued and appreciated by their organization. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to create a positive work environment that fosters employee satisfaction and motivation. When employees feel that their organization is treating them well, they are more likely to feel invested in the company's success and work harder to achieve their goals. This can lead to a virtuous cycle of improved performance, increased job satisfaction, and better business outcomes.

The results of the simple mediation model (Andrew Hayes plugin) suggest that perceived trust plays an important role in mediating the relationship between perceived organizational justice and Employee performance (H2). Leaders who demonstrate ethical behavior are expected to consider the needs and rights of their employees and relate to them in a fair manner as stated by Bello, S. M. (2012). An employee who has faith in his/her leader will be more law-abiding and follow the rules of the organization which will lead to an improvement in his/her performance and also facilitates ethical behavior in the workplace, Robbinson (1996). The study confirms the above findings. This means that when employees trust their organization, they are more likely to perceive it as being fair and just, which leads to higher motivation and better performance. Therefore, it is important for organizations to focus on building and maintaining trust among their employees, as this can have a positive impact on their performance. Covey (1998) argues that organizations should examine the impact of trust on their bottom lines along with profits and other conventional measures of success.

The results of the study also show that the correlation coefficient between perceived trust and total industry experience is .578 (significant at p < .01), indicating a moderate positive correlation, which means employees who have been with the organization for a longer period of time are more likely to trust the organization. This trust, in turn, leads to a higher perception of organizational justice, and better performance.

Lastly, the pearson correlation coefficient for age and perceived organizational justice is 0.110, which indicates a weak positive correlation between the two variables which means there is no significant correlation between age and perceived organizational justice. According to Nwanzu, C. L. (2017) perceived organizational justice does not differ significantly between men and women and between married and unmarried individuals also. This means that employees of all ages are equally likely to believe that their organization is treating them fairly and justly.

CONCLUSION:

According to the results of this study, employees' perceptions of organizational justice have a significant effect on their performance, even in the presence of perceived organizational trust. Therefore, organizations must create a culture of justice in order to maximize their employees' motivation and performance. Additionally, organizational trust appears to act as a mediator between perceived organizational justice and employee performance, according to the study. As a result, organizations should emphasize building a culture of trust to increase their employees' sense of organizational justice, and consequently, their motivation and performance. Finally, the findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between organizational trust and work experience. This means that organizations should focus on retaining employees, in order to increase organizational trust and consequently employee motivation and performance. It has been found that perceived organizational justice does not vary significantly with age, meaning that employees of all ages are equally likely to perceive their organization as being just. This indicates that age does not play a role in how employees judge their organization's fairness. Consequently, organizations should focus on other factors when trying to improve employee perceptions of justice.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The research findings have several managerial implications for organizations:

Ensure fairness in every outcome related to people in the organization: Organizations need to ensure fairness in every outcome related to people in the organization. To achieve this goal, leaders should demonstrate fair behavior, the structure of work groups, and the content of their jobs should be analyzed. Additionally, managers should ensure that all employees are treated equally and have equal opportunities.

Develop a strong organization justice program: Organizations should implement a strong organizational justice program in order to reduce attrition rates. By promoting open communication, providing regular feedback, recognizing and rewarding employees' efforts, and maintaining transparency in decision-making, this can be achieved.

Managers can promote trust by treating their employees fairly, providing a supportive work environment, and encouraging open communication. Transparency and regular feedback can also help promote trust, as can recognition for employees' efforts.

Employee satisfaction and commitment can be improved by promoting fairness and trust at work. As a result, job performance can be improved, disagreements can be reduced, and employee retention can be improved.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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