

Perceived Organizational Justice and Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviour in Ghana

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Abstract

The study investigated how employees' perception of organizational justice affect the extent to which they go beyond formally prescribed roles in their organizations (OCB) in the Ghanaian setting. Three dimensions of fairness perception of employees were studied. Using a cross-sectional survey design, 147 (81 males and 66 females) permanent employees from 13 insurance organizations within Accra-Tema Metropolis were conveniently sampled for the study. Statistical tools used for the analysis of the hypotheses were the Standard Multiple Regression and Hierarchical Multiple Regression. A significant positive relationship was observed between employees' organizational justice perception and OCB. Analysis of results indicates that employees' decision to engage in OCBs is influenced more by their perception of interactional justice than the distributive and procedural justice in the Ghanaian context. This study provides human resource practitioners with insight that employees' are more likely to engage in OCBs when they are treated with dignity, respect and stateliness rather than ensuring procedural or distributive justice.

Keywords: Social Exchange Theory, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Organizational Justice Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice, Interactional Justice, Ghana

Introduction

The demonstration of desirable workplace behaviour by employees has become important in today's dynamic, flexible and innovative world of work (Robbins, 2005). Accordingly, Organ (1988) intimated that, the effective functioning of an organization depends on employee efforts that extent beyond formal role requirements. This extra effort employee's exhibit is referred to as Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (Organ, 1988). OCB does not occur in a vacuum but rather is influenced. One variable that has been found to predict positive behaviours and is strongly supported by the social exchange theory is organizational justice (Blau, 1964).

The concept of Organizational Justice (OJ) has been discovered to correlate differentially across cultures and research context, and the decision to engage in a task is influenced by the perception of organizational processes as fair (Cropanzano & Folger, 1991). Organ (1988) in his discussion of the motivational basis of OCB, maintained that OJ perceptions play a key role in promoting OCB. Predicated upon the social exchange perspective, he also proposed an explanation whereby employees perform OCB to reciprocate the fair treatment offered by their organizations (Organ, 1990). Of the three dimensions of OJ, a large number of studies have shown that Procedural Justice is a key antecedent (Morgeson, 1999) of OCB. Other researchers (e.g. Greenberg, 1993) argue that people's evaluation of their outcomes (Distributive Justice) as unfair lead to poor performance. Research on Interactional Justice is still under harvesting. Interactional Justice refers to the idea that how decision makers in the organization treat people are important in determining equity perceptions. There is research evidence that procedural and interactional fairness have different antecedents (Schminke, Ambrose, & Cropanzano, 2000).

A look at existing research seem to present a cultural and applicability challenge especially in the Ghanaian context. Study findings on organizational justice and its antecedents according to Brockner, Ackerman, Greenberg, Gelfand, Francesco, Chen, Leung, Bierbrauer, Gomez, Kirkman, and Shapiro (2001) depend on the cultural context. Some researchers (e.g. Cho, 2008) studied the other dimensions of OJ other than Interactional Justice. Interactional justice, seem to be an important variable common and related to Ghanaian values compared to Procedural and Distributive fairness. However, McFarlin and Sweeney (2001) suggested that, formal procedures may be less important for employees in collectivist, and high power distance cultures.

Ghana seems to identify with the group described by McFarlin and Sweeney (2001). In the Ghanaian cultural setting, obeying a paternalistic leader may be more crucial than following specific procedures. This may be due to the fact that we are used to the 'do before complaint' sort of training when one is given directives by the leader of a group or family right from infancy. It appears normal for people in positions of high formal (organizational) power to make decisions with little input from those who have less formal power. Many Ghanaian employees attach great importance to positions of power and those in positions also exercise it on their subordinates. However, omitting interactional justice as one dimension of justice study might be one of the

reasons why a distinction between procedural justice and interactional justice is not widely accepted (Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2001). Against this backdrop, the researchers sought to determine how organizational justice and its components (interactional, procedural and distributive justice) influence the performance of OCB in the service industry of Ghana.

Objectives of the study

- To find out the relationship between organizational justice and OCB
- To determine the amount of variance in OCB accounted for by components of organizational justice

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the social exchange theory. According to this theory, social exchange usually occurs when individuals provide valued services for others, others typically respond with a certain level of obligation in response to and exchange for these services (Blau, 1964). The exchange is usually voluntary and often occurs between two parties especially between an employer and employee. Contemporary organizations have been viewed from this exchange perspective with organization in general and its members increasingly being conceptualized as one of an exchange (Aryee & Chay, 2001). The connection between organizational justice and OCB sits well with this theory because in the view of Organ (1988), employees perform citizenship behaviours to reciprocate the fair treatment offered them by the organization.

Konovsky and Pugh (1994) proposed that if supervisors (the embodiment of the entire organization) treat employees fairly, OCB become one of the avenues for reciprocation. Fair treatment and a social and psychologically supported work environment is an influential factor that elicits OCB from employees.

Organizational Justice and OCB

Organizational justice is strongly linked to employees' willingness to engage in behaviors helpful to the organizations (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). A meta-analysis by Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter and Ng (2001) indicates that perceptions of justice are related to several important work attitudes. Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) also found that distributive, procedural, and interactional justices are all positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors. As argued earlier, many study findings on organizational justice according to Brockner, Ackerman, Greenberg, Gelfand, Francesco, Chen, Leung, Bierbrauer, Gomez, Kirkman, and Shapiro (2001) depend on the cultural context. In lieu of this, it is hypothesized that;

1. An employee's perception of organizational justice will have a significant positive relationship with their willingness to engage in OCB.

Interactional Justice versus Distributive Justice and Procedural

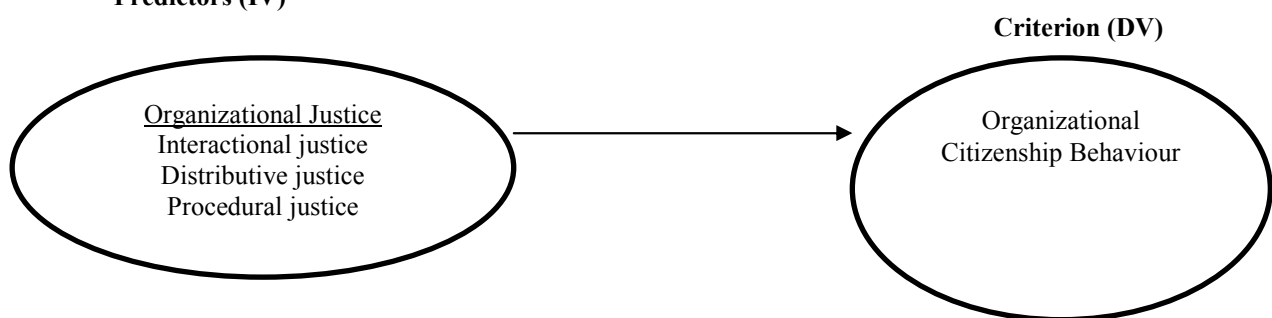
Justice perceptions are based on what a person receives in an organizational context, including tangible outcomes as well as less tangible interpersonal factors (Weiner, 2003). The most common dimensions of justice in the literature are the distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Greenberg & Lind, 2000). The idea that how decision makers in the organization treat people is important in determining equity perception especially in the Ghanaian setting. Clear and adequate explanations for allocation of resources and makes employees feel worthy and considered. Employees' involvement in the implementation process of decisions made solidifies the interpersonal relationship between them and the decision makers (managers/supervisors) (Bobocell & Holmval, 2001). Brockner and Siegel (1996) stated that 'the second wave of research sought to disentangle the effects of procedural and distributive justice' (p. 391). Recent research has shown that distributive justice is more important than procedural justice in influencing people's satisfaction with the result of the decision, whereas procedural justice is more important than distributive justice in determining their evaluations of the parties or the institution that enacted the decision (Brockner & Siegel, 1996). Wong, Mun, and Wong (2004) reported that distributive justice and procedural justice are positively related to OCB in the Chinese setting. They explored the relationship between perceived organizational justice and OCB among diverse employees working in Joint Ventures (JV) and State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) using 295 and 253 supervisors-subordinates dyads. It is noteworthy however that there was less emphasis on interactional justice. In an era where people to people interaction is given priority, it is least expected that interactional justice which involves personal respectful and polite treatment of employees and customers be ignored.

Cho (2008) tested for employee's distribution justice perception and OCB and the role played by perceived organizational support (POS) with 93 MBA students who were hired in work organizations as fulltime. Results revealed that POS acts as a mediator between distributive justice and perceptions of OCB. Even though Cho (2008) did well with his comprehensive study of justice and OCB, he only considered two of the three dimensions of OCB. Interactional justice, an important variable common and related to most African values, was not considered. However omitting interactional justice as one dimension of justice study might be one of the reasons why a distinction between procedural justice and interactional justice is not widely accepted (Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2001).

A sample of 269 employees reported their justice perceptions in Portugal in Rego and Cunha's (2009) study of justice and OCB. Three comparisons were made among the dimensions of OCB. Interactional justice significantly predicted OCB than procedural and distributive justice. Rego, Leite, Carvalho, Freire, and Vieira (2004) found that interactional justice was a better predictor of several dimensions of organizational commitment of employees than procedural justice. Based on previous findings, the relationship between distributive justice, compared to other types of justice, and OCB remains ambiguous. Some researchers argued distributive justice to be a weaker predictor of OCB (Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2000) but others suggested that the relationship is contingent upon cultural contexts (Konovsky, Elliot, & Pugh, 1995). McFarlin and Sweeney (2001) suggested that, formal procedures may be less important for employees in collectivist, and high power distance cultures. With this research paucity in mind, the present study posits that interactional justice as part of the tripartite construct will account for more variance and be significantly related to OCB than the procedural and distributive justice in the Ghanaian context.

2. Interactional justice will significantly account for more variance and be positively related to OCB than distributive and procedural justice the Ghanaian setting.

Summary of Hypothesized relationship between the Predictors and Criterion variable
Predictors (IV)



Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized predictive correlational research design to investigate the problem. This design was appropriate as the study intended to ferret out whether and how strongly pairs of variables (organizational justice as a composite variable and its dimensions and OCB) are related. Highly reliable research instruments were used to collect data on the variables. Thus, the research approach was quantitative.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A two-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the study. The first stage involved selection of organizations while the second stage involved selection of participants. Non-probability sampling strategies were employed in the study. The researchers purposively selected the insurance industry out of the many service sector industries in Ghana because it has the laid down structures that facilitate the testing of the variables in the study. With this type of sampling, the researchers were able to get the opinions of the target population that are more readily accessible (Aron & Aron, 1999). However, the selecting of organizations within the insurance industry as well as participants for the study was done using convenience sampling method. This method ensured that organizations or participants who were interested in the study and willing to be involved were selected. Thirteen (13) registered insurance organizations under the National Insurance Commission (NIC) were conveniently sampled. The participants comprised only permanent workers from the selected organizations who were either in the managerial or non-managerial rank. A total of 147 participants were involved in the study. Out of 230 questionnaires administered, 147 filled and returned usable questionnaires were obtained – representing a response rate of 63.9%. The ages of respondents ranged from 23 to 51 years ($M=30.45$, $SD = 6.64$). With regards to tenure at their current organization, the minimum was 0.17 (2 months) and the maximum 30 years ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 4.94$). The sample consisted of 81 males (55%) and 66 female (45%) employees.

Measuring Instruments

Organizational Justice was measured with 20-item scale adapted from Moorman (1991) ($\alpha = 0.86$). The scale captured the tripartite dimensions of fairness (5, 6 and 9 items measuring Distributive, Procedural and Interactional fairness respectively). The present study adopted response categories ranging from (1) 'No, I strongly Disagree' to (7) 'Yes, I strongly agree'. High scores indicate a more justice perception and vice versa. Sample items are 'My work schedule is fair', 'when decisions are made about my job, my boss is sensitive to my needs' and 'my manager explains very clearly decisions made about my job'. ($\alpha = 0.86$).

OCB was measured with 19-item scale by Moorman and Blakely (1995) ($\alpha = 0.89$). Items were scored on a seven-point response format ranging from (1) 'does not describe my behavior at all' to (7) describes my

behaviour perfectly. Sample questionnaires included ‘I defend my organization when outsiders criticize it’. ($\alpha=0.87$).

Procedure

Permission was sought from the human resource departments of the various organizations of interest. Once permission was granted, the researcher sought specific demographical information about employees from the Human Resources Departments of the organizations. This was to purposively select only those that met the criteria for inclusion. In order to gain acceptance and make in-roads into the participants for the purpose of collecting data, research agents who were workers and colleagues of the prospective respondents were identified and briefed about the rationale for the study in each organization. The research assistant’s role became very important since the respondent’s main concern was trust; whether they could trust the purpose for which the information was collected. Hence, employees were contacted and briefed about the research, and their voluntary participation was sought. The questionnaires were accompanied with information sheet which outlined the purpose of the study, instructions for completing and returning the questionnaire as suggested by Babbie (1998). Out of the 230 questionnaires distributed, only 147 (63.9 % response rate) usable questionnaires were returned. Ethical considerations observed included the researcher seeking informed consent from all participants before the questionnaires were administered, and confidentiality of responses. Data collection lasted for six weeks. The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

The normality of the data obtained for the study was verified. All the study variables were normally distributed (see table 1.0). Normality was accepted when Skewness and Kurtosis were between -1 and +1 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Coefficient of internal consistency (Cronbach’s α) was also computed to establish the reliability of each of the scales in the questionnaire. Measures had satisfactory reliabilities, with alpha values ranging from .75 to .87

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Indices of the Study Variables

Variables	Kurtosis	Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness
Org. Justice	.86	95.49	17.84	-.078	.107
Distributive Justice	.75	25.21	6.83	.210	.532
Procedural Justice	.82	27.45	6.81	-.457	.270
Interactional Justice	.86	41.66	8.84	-.149	-.415
OCB		101.99	13.17	-.148	-.024

Total Number of Respondents (N=147)

Two hypotheses were tested in the study. Standard and Hierarchical Regression tests were used to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was tested using Standard regression, and hypothesis 2 was tested using Hierarchical Multiple regression test. Below are the hypotheses tested in the study

1. Perception of organizational justice will have a significant positive relationship with their willingness to engage in OCB.
2. Interactional justice will significantly account for more variance and be positively related to OCB than distributive and procedural justice in the Ghanaian setting.

Table 2: Results of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for Organizational Justice as a predictor of OCB

Model		B	SE β	β
1	(Constant)	85.126	5.737	
	Organizational Justice	.171	.059	.226**

R²=.112, ** p<.01

As shown in Table above, organizational justice significantly and positively predicted OCB ($\beta=.266$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that employees were more likely to engage in OCB when they perceive their organization to be characterized by high levels of justice than when justice was low. Justice accounted for 11.2% of the variance in

OCB. The overall model was significant [$F(1, 158) = 8.467, p < .01$] which shows that organizational justice alone significantly predicted OCB in the Ghanaian setting.

Hypothesis 2 was tested using Hierarchical Multiple regression test. The result is presented in Table below.

Table 2: Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Distributive, Procedural and Interactional Justice as Predictors of OCB

Model		B	SE β	β
1	(Constant)	83.493	5.241	
	Interactional Justice	.434	.123	.300**
2	(Constant)	82.940	5.292	
	Interactional Justice	.305	.202	.211
	Procedural Justice	.216	.267	.113
3	(Constant)	82.115	5.680	
	Interactional Justice	.296	.204	.205
	Procedural Justice	.194	.172	.039
	Distributive Justice	.071	.172	.039

$R^2 = .090, .095$ and $.096$ for steps 1, 2 and 3 respectively. $\Delta R^2 = .005$ and $.001$ for steps 2 and 3

** $p < .01$

Summary of the results revealed a significant model [$F(1, 125) = 4.356, p < .05$]. A look at the variables individually indicated that Interactional Justice ($\beta = .300, p < .05$) significantly and positively predicted OCB accounting for 9.0% of the variance in OCB. Procedural Justice ($\beta = .113, p > .05$) and Distributive Justice ($\beta = .039, p > .05$) however did not significantly predict OCB. The hypothesis that 'Interactional justice will significantly account for more variance and be positively related to OCB than distributive and procedural justice' was therefore supported.

Discussion

The researchers investigated perceived organizational justice on employees' organizational citizenship behaviour in Ghana. In view of this, the researchers sought to find out the predictive relationship between organizational justice and OCB and the unique contribution of the three dimensions of organizational justice and their relationship with OCB in the insurance industry in Ghana.

The theoretical position taken by the researchers that, organizational justice will significantly and positively relate to OCB was confirmed by the empirical findings evidenced in the present study. This translates to the fact that, when employees feel that they are fairly treated (i.e. interactionally, distributively and procedurally), they naturally would demonstrate positive organizational behaviours like OCB.

Relationship between Interactional, Distributive, Procedural Justice and OCB

It was stated that interactional justice will significantly account for more variance and be positively related to OCB than distributive and procedural justice. The results of the present study support this hypothesis. This presupposes that when employees perceive fair treatment with regards respect and dignity, their commitment to perform increases compared to merely distributing resources or following laid down principles. This is consistent with many past findings (Mcfarlin & Sweeney, 2001; Rego & Cunha, 2009; Rego et al., 2004). A look at the findings of Rego and Cunha's (2009) study gives a similar support for confirming this hypothesis in the Ghanaian setting.

A critical look at the literature reveals that distributive justice is usually grounded on the equity principle (Adams, 1965) and the economic exchange principle (Blau, 1964). Consistent with Rego and Cunha (2009), people feel fairly treated when they receive outcomes proportional to their contributions. The better the performance, the higher the outcomes must be. However, not until lately, rewarding performance was not a strong feature of Ghanaian organizational culture as majority of organizations were state-owned that emphasizes on seniority instead. Furthermore, some evidence suggest that equity is less preferred in collectivistic cultures (Gelfand et al., 2007), where equality may be preferred. Ghana is also high in power distance and, as Paine and Organ (2000) suggest, employees in higher power distance cultures may keep demonstrating OCB even when things are not fair, because inequity is accepted, while employees in low power distance cultures may withhold OCB when they perceive inequity in terms of procedural and distributive justice.

Ghanaian employees are potentially more reactive to the interactional dimension of justice as suggested by the findings of the present study. Concern for individual employees, their plight, sensitivity, dignity and respect which encompasses interactional justice is of more importance than distributive and procedural justice. The results of the present study seem to suggest that Ghanaian employees value affiliative relationships, and want to be treated with dignity and respect by their supervisors. It is vital that management of organizations provide information about procedures, be genuine and sound explanations of decisions.

The fact that interactional justice accounted for more variance in predicting OCB than distributive and procedural justices implies that the leader or supervisor plays a vital role in creating interactional fairness in the Ghanaian context. This is apparent as 8 out of the 9 items used in capturing the interactional justice perception involved the manager-subordinate dyad. This finding is in consonance with Bateman and Organ (1983), Farh et al. (1990), Moorman (1991) and Wong and Lui (2007). All these researchers were of the view that the supervisor or manager represents the most direct source of variance in events that give rise to a felt need to reciprocate. As Wong and Lui (2007) suggested, workers leave managers and not the organizations. It is worth mentioning that distribution of resources due employees and formal procedures may both fulfill the same function but the present study shows that supervisory action and interpersonal relations is more effective in eliciting OCB. Consistent with Farh et al. (1990), interactional justice was found to be related to behaviors directed toward the supervisor or manager. When employees feel fairly treated by the supervisor, they feel obligated to reciprocate by performing activities above and beyond written in-role job descriptions. Supervisor's fair and respectful treatment of subordinates evokes a feeling that it is worthwhile working for the organization (Farh et al., 1990).

It is imperative that insurance organizations engage in policies and practices that facilitate interpersonal relationship with all workers. As Ghana surges forward in their economic growth and trade liberalization, there is the need for organizations to incorporate policies that enhance employee development and innovation. Human resource management practices of organizations that are conceived as fair with the potential of eliciting desirable behaviors like OCB should be tied to the corporate strategy of the organization. This engenders identification and a socio-emotional attachment from employees. Therefore, it is suggested here that organizations provide considerate and beneficial support to their members from whom voluntary efforts are anticipated.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study may not generalize to the Ghanaian service sector in general because it was skewed to the insurance industry. Also, the use of non-probability sampling strategies made generalization of the research findings impossible. Further, evidence of significant relationship between the predictors and criterion does not suggest cause-effect relationship as the correlational design used was inadequate and therefore not capable of making such conclusions possible. The study was limited to only permanent employees in the organization despite the increasing number of other categories of employees such as part-time/temporary staff in Ghanaian organizations. In view of this, the researchers suggest that future research broaden the participants' base to include part-time/temporary staff. The need to do a comparative study is strengthened by the view that full-time workers tend to engage in social exchange-based relationship (Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001) and part-time or contingent workers exhibit lower organizational commitment and OCB than full-time regular workers (DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2007).

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretically, this study adds empirical support to the assertion that organizational justice as one of the key indicators associated with employees' willingness to go above and beyond their job requirements. The findings have implications for Human resource practitioners in showing the importance of interactional justice on employees' display of OCB. The study provides empirical evidence that in organizational contexts, efforts to increase OCB should be focused on treating employees with dignity, respect and stateliness especially through leader-subordinate relations. The present study enjoins managers/supervisors (who act as embodiment of the organization) appreciate the need to treat valuable employees in a fair with more emphasis on interactional justice so as to increase employees' sense of engaging in citizenship behaviors that benefits the organization as a whole. This is in line with Weick's (1995) suggestion that managers serve as interpretative filters of relevant work events, features and processes. To this effect, organizational managers and supervisors must begin to view their functions and actions as messages and communications that have implications for modeling employees' fairness perception.

Conclusion

The performance of positive behaviours are based on the concept of exchange due largely to the fact that workplace practices such as fairness climate has the potential to lead to the reciprocation of positive behaviours like OCB in organizations. The findings obtained in the study are consistent with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Specifically, organizational justice significantly and positively predicted the performance of OCB in the service sector of Ghana. Additionally, it was observed that interactional justice accounted for a significant amount of variance in OCB than procedural and distributive justice. The empirical evidence reported in this study clearly shows that, employees engage in a form of transaction with organization in which they trade their behaviours (OCB) exchange for better treatment and conditions.

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