

CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE¹

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INTRODUCTION

Being treated fairly, or, in other words, expecting fairness from one's environment, is the most fundamental expectation individuals have. This environment can vary, sometimes family, sometimes friends, and sometimes, it includes school or work. Regardless of the environment, individuals want to achieve similar outcomes with others in similar positions. When individuals achieve this, their attitudes and behaviors towards their environment tend to become more positive. Conversely, when the opposite occurs, negative behaviors and inner restlessness in the individual may lead to restlessness in their environment as well. The same principle applies to professional life. One's perspective regarding being treated fairly is called "organizational justice". It is believed that individuals perceiving fairness from both the organization and its managers tend to display more positive behaviors toward the organization.

This study discusses the concept of organizational justice within the framework of the general concept of justice; the importance, definition, and dimensions of organizational justice; theories explaining organizational justice, and its impacts.

THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE IN GENERAL

Although justice has been discussed for centuries, there is no universally accepted definition. According to various scholars, the concept of justice is often associated with other concepts such as goodness, equality, rights, the purpose of law, and happiness. In some cases, it is even used interchangeably with these concepts (Çakar, 2013: 265).

Aristotle, a philosopher who contributed to this discourse, often refers to the concept of 'injustice' as a counterpoint to help define what is just. Since there is no

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clear definition of injustice, a conclusion can be drawn from the characteristics of the unjust person. Aristotle categorizes individuals who do not adhere to the law, act in their self-interest, and disregard principles of equality as unjust. Accordingly, an individual who adheres to the law and adopts principles of equality can be concluded as just (Karagöz, 2002: 270).

Theories Explaining the Concept of Justice

The initial theories concerning the concept of justice primarily revolved around social justice rather than organizational justice. These theories were founded based on Distributive Justice Theory (Homans, 1961), Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), and Relative Deprivation Theory (Stouffer et al., 1949) (Greenberg, 1990: 399,400). On the other hand, as the significance of justice within organizations is acknowledged, it becomes apparent that exploring social justice theories can be valuable in understanding organizational behaviors (Greenberg, 1990: 399).

Distributive Justice Theory

According to Homans, what is essential in distributional justice is not the achievement of equality but the achievement of equity. Hence, justice can be deemed to exist when there is equity in distribution. Homans states that equity in distribution can be determined according to earnings, cost, and profit ratio. For example, if two employees with different positions and responsibilities generate different earnings from their tasks, justice is achieved when the net profit, obtained by subtracting their expenses to generate these earnings, is equal (Çakır, 2006: 22).

Equity Theory

An individual anticipates receiving a reward commensurate with their contribution to the organization (DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004: 226). According to the Equity theory, an individual evaluates his/her own earnings and promotion outcomes in relation to the personal attributes and rewards of others, considering the effort, time, experience, and education he/she has invested to contribute to the organization's objectives (Flint et al., 2012: 680; DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004: 226). The individual then develops either positive or negative attitudes in response to the perceived equity or inequity, respectively (Deniz et al., 2016: 331). Accordingly, if individuals conclude that their earnings are lower than others, they seek to increase their earnings. And when this is not possible, they prefer to reduce their effort. In situations where equality does not exist in favor of an individual, even if the person's earnings are high, this person may feel resentful toward their colleagues due to the belief that they unfairly benefited. On the other

hand, if the individual believes that complete equity exists between them and their colleagues, they will feel peaceful (Tinaz, 2009: 11-12).

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation refers to one's frustration with their relative position within a reference group (Stewart, 2006: 779). Smith et al (2012: 204) defined the concept of relative deprivation through three steps. First, one makes a comparison. Second, one makes a cognitive assessment that they are disadvantaged. Third, the perceived disadvantage is considered injustice. In this case, one believes that he/she deserves much, leading to displaying angry behaviors.

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

Organizational justice is a term used to role of justice -a term directly related to the work environment- in organizational outcomes (Moorman, 1991: 845), and refers to the truthfulness and rightness meanings (Colquitt et al., 2001: 425). Employees' perception of justice regarding managers and organizational practices leads them to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors toward managers and organizations; on the contrary, the perception of injustice causes negative behaviors (Yürür, 2012: 189).

The term organizational justice was first used by Greenberg to define perceptions of justice within an organization (Beugré, 1998: xi). Organizational justice is the perception of decisions taken by managers as 'positive' by employees. In more detail, the term defines employees' perception regarding the way organizational resources such as wages, rewards, and punishments are distributed, how the distribution decisions are made, and how these decisions are explained to employees (İçerli, 2010: 69).

Organizational justice constitutes a foundation for all organizational practices (Demirkaya & Kandemir, 2014: 264) and is shaped by employees' perceptions (Çelik et al., 2014: 561). The important thing regarding justice is perception (Tutar, 2007: 98). Therefore, rather than managers expressing themselves as just, it's the employees' belief that they are treated fairly that matters (Çelik et al., 2014: 561), or rather than the presence or absence of injustice, the perception of this situation by employees is important (Tutar, 2007: 98).

A general review of literature on organizational justice revealed that the definitions of this concept are made based on the dimensions of organizational justice, which include distributional justice (how distribution takes place within the organization), procedural justice (how the decisions regarding the distribution

are made), and interactional justice (how the explanation of resource distribution is communicated to employees).

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

Due to the subjectivity of the concept of justice, it is considered an issue that needs to be examined in the context of organizations. Why do we study organizational justice? Who determines whether a behavior is fair or not? Why do people seek justice? The answers to such questions are linked to the significance of justice, not only as a social phenomenon but also as a research subject and a human virtue (Beugré, 1998: xv)

There is a growing interest related to organizations and managers exhibiting fairer attitudes and behaviors toward employees (Kickul et al., 2005: 205). The increasing number of studies addressing the concept of organizational justice (Luo, 2007: 644) stems from this interest. Another reason for the growing interest in organizational justice is that perceived organizational justice affects many organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Çakar & Yıldız, 2009: 69).

The concept of organizational justice, referring to individuals' perceptions of justice within an organization, has become a prominent topic among scholars in industrial and organizational psychology, human resource management, and organizational behavior in recent years (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997: 3). Many studies conducted on organizational justice, an intensely examined concept in management, applied psychology, and organizational behavior, indicated that this subject has significant outcomes for organizations and organization members (Parker & Kohlmeyer, 2005: 357).

Stress and deteriorated health of organization members caused by negative perceptions of justice increase absenteeism, resulting in loss of labor force. To avoid such negative situations, ensuring organizational justice is recommended (Şahin & Kavas, 2016: 123).

Employees' perceptions of organizational justice are shaped by the attitudes and behaviors they encounter, as well as their personal evaluations of events while performing their tasks. Therefore, it is advisable for organizational managers to periodically assess employees' perceptions of organizational justice and implement necessary adjustments (Tuna, 2013: 999).

The importance of organizational justice studies can be explained through

three items (Beugré, 1998: xi). First, justice is a social phenomenon and affects all people's social and organizational life. Second, the most important entity of organizations is human resources. How an organization treats its employees affects employees' attitudes and behaviors such as loyalty, trust, performance, intention to quit, and aggression. Finally, the workforce has become increasingly composed of highly educated employees over time. With greater skills and education, people aspire to secure better jobs and anticipate being treated with respect and recognition in the workplace.

It is considered a manager's responsibility to ensure that employees hold a positive perspective toward both the managers and the organization. Ensuring employees have a positive perspective can be achieved by empowering their perceptions of organizational justice. And to achieve this, methods such as involving employees in decisions that affect them and maintaining an equitable relationship with employees can be recommended (İyigün, 2012: 60).

Meeting employees' expectations is an important factor in ensuring motivation. In addition to fair distribution of organizational resources, fairness in determining distribution criteria and appropriate disclosure of distribution decisions to employees are among employee expectations from the organization (İçerli, 2010: 87).

The level of organizational justice is one of the most crucial factors in achieving a balance between the objectives of the organization and its employees, as well as in increasing productivity (Örücü & Özafşarlıoğlu, 2013: 336). Employees develop some attitudes toward their organizations and jobs as they make a judgment about whether they are treated fairly in the organization (Tetik, 2012: 240). Due to the significant impact of employees' perceptions of justice on their behaviors, organizational behavior researchers are increasingly focusing on this subject (Irak, 2004: 26).

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

In this study, as is common practice, the concept of organizational justice is addressed in three dimensions: distributional justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice.

Distributional Justice

Distributional justice, in its broader definition, refers to employees' perception of the fairness of distribution outcomes (Ambrose et al., 2007: 22). Accordingly, it was highlighted that employees pay attention not to the amount but to the justice

of the results they achieved (Colquitt et al., 2001: 426). Distributional justice is the perception that outcomes are fair when employees compare their gains in return for their contributions to the organization with those of their colleagues (Greenberg, 1990: 400).

The basis of distributional justice is the comparison of what organizational members receive from the organization in return for what they contribute to the organization (Lambert, 2003: 156-157; DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004: 226). After this comparison, employees develop an opinion about whether the distribution of organizational resources is fair, which constitutes their perception of justice (Özdevecioğlu, 2003: 78). However, even employees who achieve at the same level may have different perceptions of justice if they use different references to evaluate their achievements (Yıldırım, 2007: 257). The references individuals use include the adequacy of rewards, their expectations, needs, and general social norms (Cropanzano & Greenberg 1997: 8).

The concepts that are the foundation of distributional justice include equity, equality, and needs (Luo, 2007: 646; Colquitt et al., 2001: 426). The concepts at the foundation of distributional justice include 'equity' refers to distributing rewards based on employees' contributions, 'equality' refers to providing equal salaries to employees performing similar tasks, and 'need' refers to distributing rewards according to employees' needs (Cropanzano et al., 2007: 36).

Procedural Justice

The concept of procedural justice focuses on the determination of rewards to be distributed to organization members and the processes involved in their distribution (Patrick, 2012: 24). Put another way, procedural justice is related to employees' perceptions of how the results they achieve in distribution are determined (Folger & Konovsky, 1989: 115). Procedural justice refers to the degree of fairness in wages, promotions, working conditions, and the methods and policies used to evaluate individual performance within the organization (Alkış & Güngörmez, 2015: 941).

Procedural justice involves receiving employees' opinions both in the decision-making process and the implementation of this process (Töremen & Tan, 2010: 65), and is also considered the perception of justice regarding the methods used in making distribution decisions (Cropanzano et al., 2007: 38; Folger & Greenberg, 1985: 143; Bies & Shapiro, 1988: 676).

The responsibilities of the managers for ensuring that decisions made within the organization are perceived as 'fair' by employees can be listed as follows (Folger & Bies, 1989: 82):

- a) taking employees' views into account,
- b) being free from prejudice,
- c) applying decision-making criteria consistently to all employees,
- d) informing employees about the decisions taken in a timely manner,
- e) basing decisions on rational grounds,
- f) being honest in communication,
- g) showing courtesy to employees.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice refers to justice in interpersonal relationships during the decision-making process (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011: 1183; Cropanzano & Stein, 2009: 196). People pay attention to justice in organizational decision-making methods. Additionally, they are also interested in how they are treated in interpersonal relationships (Bies, 2001: 91). Interactional justice is the dimension of organizational practices that focuses on interpersonal behaviors and the communication processes between organization managers and employees (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001: 279).

Interactional justice is related to the way managers explain decisions about employees and focuses on the relationships between those making distribution decisions and the employees who are affected by those decisions (Gürbüz & Mert, 2009: 123), and can be achieved through respectful and honest disclosure of the methods used in making distribution decisions within the organization (İçerli, 2010: 86).

After the emergence of the procedural justice concept in addition to distributional justice, it was initially believed that justice in the outcomes and the processes leading to those outcomes were sufficient to explain organizational justice. However, over time, a third dimension called interactional justice, which deals with interpersonal relations, emerged (Irak, 2004: 33). Employees' perception of justice is not solely shaped by justice in their earnings and the methods implemented during the distribution of these earnings, but also the quality of the interpersonal relationships (Cihangiroğlu & Yılmaz, 2010: 210).

Table 1 summarizes the concept of organizational justice under three dimensions namely, distributional justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice.

Table 1. Dimensions of organizational justice	
1. Distributitional Justice	Appropriateness of results
Equity	Distribution of rewards according to the contribution of employees
Equality	Equal salaries for all employees
Need	Distribution according to the personal needs of the employees
2. Procedural Justice	Appropriateness of results of distribution processes
Consistency	Treating all employees the same
Neutrality	Non-discrimination and maltreatment of individuals or groups.
Accuracy	Making decisions based on accurate information
Consensus	Joint decision by all stakeholders
Correction	A mechanism to evaluate objections and correct mistakes
Morality	No violation of professional norms
3. Interactional Justice	Appropriateness of authorities' behavior towards employees
Interpersonal justice	Treating employees with courtesy and respect
Informational justice	Sharing information that employees need to know

Source: Cropanzano, R., Bowen, D. E. and Gilliland, S. W. (2007). The Management of Organizational Justice. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*. 21(4): p.36.

Theories of Organizational Justice

To explain the concept of organizational justice, Greenberg (1987) made a classification as reactive-process, reactive-content, proactive-process, and proactive-content. This classification is a combination of independent dimensions namely, reactive, proactive, process, and content (Greenberg, 1987: 9). According to Greenberg (1987: 15), such a classification of organizational justice offers some benefits. First, it contributes to the clarification of relationships between concepts. Second, it helps explore the course of organizational justice research. Finally, it allows identifying the areas within the subject that require further investigation.

According to this classification proposed by Greenberg (1987), distributitional justice examines how individuals react to situations they perceive as unjust, which typically occurs after the injustice has taken place. On the other hand, procedural justice and interactional justice address efforts put forward to achieve justice. Therefore, distributitional justice has reactive, whereas, procedural justice and interactional justice have proactive characteristics (Çakır, 2006: 32).

In this organizational justice theory, the combination of reactive-proactive and process-content dimensions results in the emergence of four different dimensions: reactive-content theories, reactive-process theories, proactive-content theories, and proactive-process theories (İyigün, 2012: 55). The classification of organizational justice theories is presented in Table 2.

Reactive-Proactive Dimension	Process-Content Dimension	
	Content	Process
Reactive	Reactive Content Equity Theory (Adams,1965)	Reactive Process Procedural Justice Theory (Thibaut & Walker,1975)
Proactive	Proactive Content Justice Judgment Theory (Leventhal, 1976, 1980)	Proactive Process Allocation Preference Theory (Leventhal, Karuza & Fry,1980)

Source: Greenberg, J. (1987). A Taxonomy of Organizational Justice Theories. *Academy of Management Review*. 12(1): s.10.

REACTIVE-CONTENT THEORIES

These theories include approaches focusing on employees’ reactions to unjust organizational practices. A majority of the organizational justice theories are among reactive content theories (Greenberg, 1987: 11). The most important of these is Adams’ (1965) Equity Theory (Greenberg, 1987: 10).

According to equity theory, individuals compare the earnings and promotional outcomes they receive from the organization in exchange for their efforts, time, experience, and education level with the personal characteristics and earnings of others (Flint et al., 2012: 680). Based on the results of these comparisons, individuals develop either positive or negative attitudes toward perceived equity or inequity conditions, respectively (Deniz et al., 2016: 331). If an individual concludes that their earnings are lower than others’ earnings, they seek to increase their earnings. When this is not possible, they may prefer to reduce their effort. In circumstances where justice isn’t perceived in favor of the individual, even if the person’s income is substantial, there may be a sense of resentment towards colleagues, stemming from the belief that they’ve gained unfairly. Conversely, when individuals perceive a state of complete equity between themselves and their colleagues, a sense of tranquility prevails (Tinaz, 2009: 11-12).

Reactive-Process Theories

Reactive process theories stem from law and focus on whether the procedures utilized in making decisions are fair or not. The theory was developed in the 1970s by John Thibaut and Laurens Walker based on research about legal procedures and reactions to dispute resolution (Greenberg, 1987: 13).

Proactive-Content Theories

Proactive-content theory is based on Leventhal's (1976, 1980) "Justice Judgment Theory" (Greenberg, 1987: 10-12), and unlike reactive content theories, which examine employees' reactions to fair and unfair distributions, it examines employees' efforts to ensure fair distributions (Greenberg, 1987: 12).

Proactive-Process Theories

These theories focus on possible procedures that can be used to ensure fair implementation of organizational practices (İyigün, 2012: 57). The most important theory in this classification is the Allocation Preference Theory developed by Leventhal et al. (1980) (Greenberg, 1987: 10-14).

Allocation preference theory envisages that allocation procedures can be preferred as they contribute to achieving justice. Accordingly, the possibility that is considered to have the most impact on achieving the objectives will be preferred. The allocation preference theory has some rules that can help achieve justice. These rules include the use of consistent and accurate information, the determination of decision-making power structures, precautions against bias, the evaluation of objections, the flexibility to change procedures, and reliance on general ethical principles (Greenberg, 1987: 15).

IMPACTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

Many studies on organizational justice provide evidence that perceived justice has significant impacts on both organizations and organization members (Parker & Kohlmeyer, 2005: 357). Research results indicate that organizational justice, in general, has an impact on various concepts, including job satisfaction, turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, organizational trust, organizational cynicism, and performance. Some of these studies are discussed below and the impacts of organizational justice on both organizations and organization members are comprehensively addressed.

A positive perception of justice by organization employees often contributes to their success, happiness, and increased productivity. On the other hand, employees

with a negative perception of organizational justice can lead to negative outcomes such as low performance, absenteeism, and job alienation (İyigün, 2012: 60). Consistent with this, a study conducted by Çetin and Polat (2021) revealed that organizational justice has a positive impact on organizational happiness, which means organizational happiness increases as perceived organizational justice increases. Furthermore, a study carried out by Kılıç and Tokar (2020) showed that organizational justice has a negative impact on organizational cynicism; perceived organizational justice reduces organizational cynicism.

Depending on whether the perception of organizational justice is positive or negative, there can be different consequences, both positive and negative, including the perception of respect and trust, absenteeism, employee turnover, job satisfaction, quality of relationships between colleagues, performance, job commitment, stress, and aggression (St-Pierre & Holmes, 2010: 1179). Another study indicated that negative justice perceptions cause significantly lower productivity (Demirkaya & Kandemir, 2014: 264).

Organizational justice perception has several positive impacts such as heightened organizational trust and loyalty, increased performance, exhibiting organizational citizenship behaviors, customer satisfaction, and reduced conflict (Cropanzano et al., 2007: 34; Kalay, 2016: 147). On the contrary, employees' feelings, which are aroused when they perceive themselves at a disadvantage compared to others, can lead them to fight against the system that creates this situation (Suliman, 2007: 295-296).

In studies examining dimensions of organizational justice, these impacts are separately examined for each dimension. Accordingly, the absence of distributional justice leads to conflict, distrust, and disrespect in the organization as well as some other social problems (Suliman, 2007: 296). On the other hand, procedural justice has some emotional and behavioral impacts, such as organizational commitment, organizational trust, job satisfaction, compliance with decisions, and increased performance (Suliman, 2007: 295). Similarly, the perception of justice in practices by employees can yield many benefits, while perceiving these practices as unfair can be a source of organizational problems (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997: 5).

Procedural justice is related to organizational citizenship behavior and organizational loyalty, whereas distributional justice is more closely linked to job satisfaction and productivity (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002: 194). While distributional justice, a dimension of organizational justice, affects job satisfaction, procedural justice affects both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Martin & Bennett, 1996: 94).

Moorman (1991) examined the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational justice and found that the perception of justice, especially interaction justice, plays a role in the formation of organizational citizenship behavior. For this reason, it is important that managers treat employees fairly (Moorman, 1991: 854). In another study examining the relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior, interpersonal justice was found to be more effective on organizational citizenship behavior (Chen & Jin, 2014: 310).

Furthermore, Özdevecioğlu, (2003: 79) addressed it from a different perspective and stated that the outcomes of organizational justice perception can be categorized into three main areas: reactions to outcomes of distributional injustice, reactions to the organization as a whole resulting from procedural injustice, and reactions to managers resulting from interactional injustice.

CONCLUSION

Individuals spend most of their lives at work. Therefore, working life dramatically impacts the individual. Furthermore, every action taken in the workplace has a beneficial or detrimental effect on the person involved. These actions also shape the individual's perception of organizational justice. As a result of the practices that the individual considers appropriate, correct, and positive, her perception of organizational justice becomes positive. Negative, wrong, and erroneous behaviors that the individual encounters in the organization negatively affect the perception of organizational justice. In general, organizational justice is effective on job satisfaction, turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, organizational trust, organizational cynicism, and performance. Therefore, organizational justice is essential to many organizational behavior concepts.

In this study, the concept of organizational justice has been discussed within the framework of the concept of justice in general, the importance, definition, and dimensions of organizational justice, theories aimed at explaining organizational justice, and the effects of organizational justice. Organizational justice refers to the employee's perception of the distribution of organizational resources, the methods used in distribution, and how these methods are explained. This study discusses the concept of organizational justice in three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interaction justice.

The aim of this study is to draw a general framework for the concept of organizational justice, which has an impact on employee success, motivation, and happiness. Finally, it has been revealed within the framework of literature information how the perception of organizational justice will have an impact if it is positive or negative. Thus, by emphasizing the effects of the concept of organizational justice on individuals and organizations, it was aimed to draw attention to what needs to be done to achieve positive results.

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