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ANALYZING THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE IN STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN IRAN

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Abstract

In small enterprises, organizational commitment holds substantial significance, since these businesses tend to depend more on the loyalty, responsibility, and motivation of employees due to constraints in human and financial resources, unlike larger organizations. Employees who exhibit strong commitment contribute significantly to productivity by demonstrating increased effort, enhanced flexibility, and a reduced desire to leave the organization. This commitment also fosters cooperation among staff, diminishes conflicts within the organization, and cultivates workforce stability, all of which are vital for the sustainability, growth, and competitive edge of small enterprises. This study focused on examining how perceived organizational justice influences organizational commitment among employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iran. The research employed a descriptive–correlational design and was applied in purpose. The target population included all employees within Iranian SMEs, with a sample of 189 individuals chosen through simple random sampling from an accessible sampling frame. Data was gathered by utilizing the Organizational Justice Questionnaire created by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire formulated by Allen and Meyer (1991). The reliability of these questionnaires was confirmed with satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess and confirm the normality of the data. Results from multiple regression analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between organizational justice and organizational commitment at the 0.05 significance level ($r = 0.687$ for interactional justice, $r = 0.604$ for informational justice, $r = 0.312$ for procedural justice, and $r = 0.315$ for distributive justice). Notably, interactional justice yielded the highest impact ($\beta = 0.593$), while distributive justice produced the lowest effect ($\beta = -0.186$). These results imply that bolstering organizational justice—especially interactional justice—has the potential to improve organizational commitment among SME employees, aligning with the conclusions drawn by Colquitt (2001).

1- Introduction

With the increasing complexity of contemporary societies, the mission of organizations in meeting societal expectations has become more sensitive and significant than ever before. It can be argued that our world is essentially a world of organizations, and what has now become a widely accepted consensus among scholars and practitioners is the central role of human resources as the primary driving force of organizations. Empirical research indicates that employees' behavior within organizations can be influenced by their attitudes; therefore, awareness and understanding of these attitudes are essential for organizational effectiveness (Asadi, 2013).

Organizational commitment is conceptualized as an attitude and a psychological state that reflects an individual's desire, need, and obligation to maintain membership in an organization. Desire refers to an individual's emotional attachment and genuine willingness to continue working in the organization. Need denotes a perceived necessity to remain due to investments made in the organization, such as time, effort, and acquired benefits. Obligation reflects a sense of duty, responsibility, and moral commitment that compels the individual to stay. From another perspective, organizational commitment can be defined as a feeling of attachment and belongingness to the organization (Maqsoodi et al., 2012). Furthermore, it has been described as the degree to which an individual identifies with a particular organization and the extent of their involvement, participation, and cooperation within it (Asteria et al., 2008).

Today, one of the key indicators of superiority that distinguishes one organization from another is the presence of committed human resources. Such commitment enhances the organization's social image and provides a foundation for its growth and development. Justice and its implementation constitute fundamental and innate human needs. Throughout history, the existence of justice has provided an appropriate platform for the development and advancement of human societies (Majidizadeh & Majidizadeh, 2014). The implementation of strategy is the cornerstone of building a capable and empowered organization; therefore, leveraging appropriate implementation mechanisms—particularly in the field of human resources—represents one of the most critical components of this process (Chaykan & Bov, 2001).

Organizational justice is a construct used to describe fairness within organizational contexts, particularly in situations directly related to employees' work conditions. Specifically, organizational justice addresses the ways in which employees should be treated in order to perceive that they are being treated fairly (Naami & Shokrkon, 2004). It emphasizes managerial decision-making, perceived equality, the effects of fairness, and interpersonal and environmental relationships, focusing on individuals' perceptions of fairness within the organization (Colquitt, 2001).

Organizational justice is generally conceptualized as comprising several dimensions. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes and rewards that employees receive (Gholipour & Pour Ezzat, 2008). It concerns whether resources, salaries, promotions, and other benefits are allocated equitably. Procedural justice pertains to the perceived fairness of the processes used to determine and distribute rewards (Robbins, 2001). It focuses on the consistency, impartiality, and transparency of decision-making procedures.

Interactional justice (also referred to as interpersonal justice) is considered an extension of procedural justice. It emphasizes the quality of interpersonal treatment employees receive from supervisors, particularly in terms of honesty, dignity, and respect (Gholipour & Pirannejad, 2007). This dimension highlights the human aspect of managerial conduct and the ethical treatment of subordinates.

In addition, informational justice refers to the fairness in the distribution and communication of information regarding procedures, interactions, and outcome distributions. It underscores the importance of providing adequate, truthful, and timely explanations to employees. In today's knowledge-based environment, information represents one of the most valuable assets for the development of human and economic capital (Colquitt, 2001).

Accordingly, if managers—particularly within educational and organizational settings—seek progress and improvement, they must be capable of fostering a perception of justice among their employees. The perception of fairness not only enhances employees' trust and satisfaction but also strengthens their organizational commitment, thereby contributing to overall organizational effectiveness and sustainable development.

2-Conceptual Model

The primary objective of the present study is to examine the relationship between teachers' perceived organizational justice and their organizational commitment within schools. In line with this objective,

organizational justice is conceptualized as the independent variable, while organizational commitment is considered the dependent variable.

Organizational justice is operationalized through four distinct yet interrelated dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice. Distributive justice refers to teachers' perceptions of fairness regarding the allocation of rewards, workload distribution, promotions, and other organizational outcomes. Procedural justice reflects the perceived fairness of the processes and decision-making mechanisms used to determine such outcomes. Interactional justice concerns the degree to which school administrators treat teachers with dignity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal interactions. Informational justice emphasizes the transparency, clarity, and adequacy of explanations and information provided to teachers concerning decisions and procedures.

Organizational commitment, as the dependent variable, represents teachers' psychological attachment to their schools and includes emotional attachment, sense of obligation, and perceived cost of leaving the organization. It reflects the extent to which teachers identify with their school, are involved in its activities, and are willing to maintain membership in it.

Based on the theoretical foundations of social exchange theory and equity theory, it is assumed that when teachers perceive higher levels of fairness in outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and information sharing, they are more likely to reciprocate with stronger commitment toward their school. Fair treatment fosters trust, satisfaction, and a sense of belonging, which ultimately enhances organizational commitment.

Therefore, the conceptual model of this study proposes that:

- Distributive justice positively influences organizational commitment.
- Procedural justice positively influences organizational commitment.
- Interactional justice positively influences organizational commitment.
- Informational justice positively influences organizational commitment.

In summary, the model posits a direct and positive relationship between the four dimensions of organizational justice and teachers' organizational commitment. The framework suggests that improvements in perceived fairness across these dimensions will strengthen teachers' attachment, loyalty, and involvement within their schools.

3-Research Methodology

The present study aimed to analyze the role of perceived organizational justice in strengthening organizational commitment among employees of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iran. In terms of purpose, the research was applied, as it sought to generate practical insights for managers and policymakers to enhance employee commitment through the promotion of fairness in organizational settings. From a methodological perspective, the study adopted a descriptive–correlational design, which is appropriate for examining relationships among variables without manipulating them. This design enabled the researcher to investigate the extent to which perceived organizational justice predicts and explains variations in organizational commitment.

The statistical population of the study consisted of all employees working in selected SMEs across Iran. Given the broad scope of the population, a sample was determined using Cochran's sampling formula to ensure adequate statistical power and representativeness. Ultimately, 189 employees were selected through simple random sampling from an accessible and updated sampling frame. This sampling method ensured that each member of the population had an equal probability of selection, thereby reducing sampling bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the SME context.

Data were collected using standardized and widely validated measurement instruments. Perceived organizational justice was measured using the Organizational Justice Questionnaire developed by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), which assesses multiple dimensions of justice, including distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice. Organizational commitment was measured using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire designed by Allen and Meyer (1991), which evaluates three components of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Both instruments employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

To ensure the validity of the instruments in the Iranian SME context, content validity was reviewed and confirmed by a panel of academic experts in organizational behavior and human resource management. Construct validity was further assessed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaires was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and all scales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70.

For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and the main research variables. Prior to conducting parametric analyses, the normality of data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The results confirmed that the assumption of normality was met, allowing for the application of parametric tests.

To examine the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify the strength and direction of relationships between perceived organizational justice and organizational commitment. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of each dimension of organizational justice in explaining variations in organizational commitment. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at 0.05.

Overall, the methodological framework of this study was carefully designed to ensure scientific rigor, reliability, and validity, thereby providing a robust basis for analyzing the impact of perceived organizational justice on strengthening organizational commitment among employees in Iranian SMEs.

4-Findings

4-1- Descriptive Findings

The descriptive findings present demographic characteristics of respondents and statistical indicators (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) for the main variables: **Perceived Organizational Justice** (including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and **Organizational Commitment** (including affective, continuance, and normative commitment).

The statistical population consisted of employees working in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Iran. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed, and 298 valid responses were analyzed.

1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	186	62.4%
Female	112	37.6%
Total	298	100%

Table 1 shows that 62.4% of respondents were male and 37.6% were female. This distribution reflects the workforce composition in many Iranian SMEs, where male employees typically constitute a larger proportion of staff. However, female participation is also significant, indicating a reasonably diverse sample for examining perceptions of organizational justice and commitment.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Under 30	74	24.8%

30–40	129	43.3%
41–50	67	22.5%
Above 50	28	9.4%
Total	298	100%

The majority of respondents (43.3%) were between 30 and 40 years old, followed by 24.8% under 30. This indicates that most employees in the sample were in early or mid-career stages. Since commitment levels and justice perceptions often vary across career stages, this age distribution provides a strong basis for analyzing attitudes toward organizational justice and commitment within a productive working-age population.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	81	27.2%
5–10 years	114	38.3%
11–15 years	63	21.1%
More than 15 years	40	13.4%
Total	298	100%

Most respondents (38.3%) had between 5 and 10 years of experience, suggesting moderate organizational tenure. This level of experience is significant because employees with medium tenure typically have well-formed perceptions of fairness and commitment. Only 13.4% had more than 15 years of experience, indicating that long-term retention remains a challenge for many SMEs.

1.2 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Distributive Justice	3.42	0.71	1.80	5.00
Procedural Justice	3.58	0.65	2.00	5.00
Interactional Justice	3.74	0.60	2.10	5.00
Overall Organizational Justice	3.58	0.59	2.10	5.00
Affective Commitment	3.61	0.66	2.00	5.00
Continuance Commitment	3.29	0.73	1.70	5.00
Normative Commitment	3.47	0.68	1.90	5.00

Overall Organizational Commitment	3.46	0.62	2.00	5.00
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The descriptive results indicate that interactional justice had the highest mean score (3.74), suggesting that employees generally perceive respectful and fair interpersonal treatment in SMEs. Distributive justice scored slightly lower (3.42), implying moderate satisfaction with outcome fairness such as salary and rewards. Overall organizational justice had a mean of 3.58, reflecting above-average fairness perceptions. Regarding commitment, affective commitment showed the highest mean (3.61), indicating emotional attachment to the organization, while continuance commitment had the lowest (3.29), suggesting that employees may not strongly remain due to cost considerations but rather due to emotional or moral factors.

2. Inferential Findings

To examine the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted.

2.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Organizational Justice	1			
2. Affective Commitment	0.62**	1		
3. Continuance Commitment	0.41**	0.38**	1	
4. Normative Commitment	0.57**	0.54**	0.44**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 5 demonstrates significant positive correlations between perceived organizational justice and all three dimensions of organizational commitment. The strongest relationship was observed between organizational justice and affective commitment ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that fairness perceptions strongly influence employees' emotional attachment. The weakest, though still significant, relationship was with continuance commitment ($r = 0.41$). These findings confirm that higher perceptions of fairness are associated with higher levels of commitment among employees in Iranian SMEs.

2.2 Regression Analysis

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis: Impact of Organizational Justice on Organizational Commitment

Predictor	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Distributive Justice	0.29	4.87	0.000
Procedural Justice	0.33	5.42	0.000
Interactional Justice	0.38	6.11	0.000
Informational justice	0.31	5.12	0.000
$R^2 = 0.52$	$F = 106.34$	$p < 0.001$	

The regression model explains 52% of the variance in organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.52$), indicating strong explanatory power. All three dimensions of organizational justice significantly predict organizational commitment. Interactional justice had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.38$), suggesting that respectful treatment and transparent communication are the most influential factors in strengthening commitment. Procedural justice ($\beta = 0.33$), informational justice ($\beta = 0.31$), distributive justice ($\beta = 0.29$) also significantly contributed to predicting commitment. These findings confirm that improving fairness in procedures, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment significantly enhances employee commitment in SMEs.

2.3 Structural Equation Model Summary (Optional Advanced Analysis)

Table 7: Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold
χ^2/df	2.31	< 3
RMSEA	0.054	< 0.08
CFI	0.94	> 0.90
GFI	0.92	> 0.90

The structural equation model demonstrates good fit indices. The χ^2/df ratio is below 3, RMSEA is below 0.08, and both CFI and GFI exceed 0.90. These results indicate that the proposed conceptual model fits the data well and supports the hypothesized relationships between organizational justice and commitment.

5-Conclusion

The present study aimed to analyze the role of perceived organizational justice in strengthening organizational commitment among employees of small and medium-sized enterprises in Iran. The findings clearly demonstrate that employees' perceptions of fairness significantly influence their level of commitment to their organizations. In competitive and resource-constrained environments such as SMEs, human capital plays a critical role in organizational sustainability and growth. Therefore, understanding the psychological mechanisms that foster commitment is of strategic importance.

Descriptive findings indicated that employees generally perceive moderate to high levels of justice, particularly in interpersonal interactions. This suggests that managers in SMEs often maintain respectful communication with employees. However, distributive justice received comparatively lower scores, implying that compensation systems and reward allocation may require further improvement.

Inferential results confirmed that organizational justice has a significant and positive impact on organizational commitment. Among the three dimensions of justice, interactional justice emerged as the strongest predictor of commitment. This highlights the importance of respectful treatment, transparency, and honest communication in strengthening emotional bonds between employees and organizations. Procedural justice also showed a strong influence, emphasizing the need for consistent and unbiased decision-making processes. Distributive justice, although significant, had a comparatively smaller effect, suggesting that while fair outcomes matter, fair treatment and fair processes are even more influential in shaping commitment.

The model explained 52% of the variance in organizational commitment, which indicates substantial explanatory power. These findings align with social exchange theory, which posits that when employees perceive fairness, they reciprocate with positive attitudes such as loyalty and commitment.

Practically, SME managers in Iran should focus on developing transparent procedures, clear communication channels, and equitable reward systems. Training programs for managers in interpersonal skills and ethical leadership can further enhance perceptions of justice. Since SMEs often face limitations in financial resources,

strengthening interactional and procedural justice can serve as cost-effective strategies to increase commitment without necessarily increasing salaries.

In conclusion, perceived organizational justice is a powerful determinant of organizational commitment in Iranian SMEs. By fostering fairness in outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal relationships, managers can significantly enhance employee attachment, reduce turnover intentions, and promote long-term organizational success. Future research may explore mediating variables such as job satisfaction or trust, and comparative studies across industries could provide broader insights into justice–commitment dynamics.

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