

Role of Perceived Organizational Support in the Relationship of Procedural Justice with Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

The paper assessed the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) between procedural justice and organizational commitment. The study drew its sample from the fast growing and challenging banking industry of India. Procedural justice was found as an important factor for enhancing organizational commitment. POS plays a partial mediating role in this relationship, giving evidence for the existence of other mediating factors, which can be further explored. The findings suggested that the perseverance of procedural justice in an organization is indicative of the support extended to the employees by their organization, and this support stimulates the employees to give enhanced commitment towards their organization. The implications of the study were discussed, and the areas where further research is needed were also highlighted.

Keywords : organizational commitment, organizational justice, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, reciprocity norm, social exchange, well being

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In the era of global competition, the Indian banking industry has realized that a strong human resource orientation is of paramount importance. In order to solve the dilemma of attrition in Indian banking organizations, it has become imperative that loyalty and commitment of employees has to be gained by organizational interventions.

↳ **Organizational Commitment :** Committed employees have a tendency to continue with the same employer for a longer duration and work enthusiastically towards its goals (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1978). Such employees are also considered as loyal to their organizations (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian 1974), and are likely to perform better on their jobs (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jakson 1989 ; Morrow, 1993; Suliman & Iles, 2000). Such behavioral outcomes of organizational commitment (OC) have fascinated considerable curiosity among scientists and practitioners. This is evident by the numerous research on organizational commitment (e.g., Brooks & Wallace, 2006 ; Dey, Kumar, & Kumar, 2014 ; Jena, 2015 ; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sharma & Sharma, 2015 ; Yousaf, Sanders, & Shipton, 2013).

Review of studies on organizational commitment indicates that this construct can be studied from an attitudinal, motivational, and behavioral aspect. However, attitudinal aspect is the most commonly investigated. Blau and

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Boal (1987) described commitment as a “state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership to help it reach these goals” (p. 290). Meyer and Allen (1997) conceptualized organizational commitment as “a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization” (p. 67). Thus, commitment is a bond with the organization and the potency of this bond depends on various personal, group, and organizational level factors. This study intends to understand the relationship among procedural justice (PJ), perceived organizational support (POS), and organizational commitment (OC).

↳ **Perceived Organizational Justice** : Organizational justice is all about what employees perceive about fairness in organizations, which affects their attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The construct of perceived organizational justice has multiple dimensions. Three dimensional typology of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice is widely used. In the previous studies of Jepsen and Rowdell (2012) ; Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin (2007) ; and Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000), procedural justice was found as predicting organizational commitment in a better way in comparison to distributive as well as interactional justice. Therefore, this study focuses only on procedural justice dimension of perceived organizational justice.

Procedural justice (PJ) was initially conceptualized by Thibaut and Walker (1975), and the credit of using it in an organizational context goes to Leventhal and colleagues (Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980). Procedural fairness is concerned with the individual’s cognitive map of procedures that go before the distribution of reward and the evaluation of these procedures (Leventhal, 1980). Leventhal's theory of procedural justice laid down six rules (viz. consistency, accuracy, correctability, bias suppression, representativeness, and ethicality) for a fair procedure (Leventhal, 1980).

↳ **Perceived Organizational Support** : Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro (1990) defined perceived organizational support as "a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values employees' general contributions and cares for their well-being" (p. 51). Employees’ perception of organizational support develops by understanding and meeting their needs and rewarding their extra efforts and extending all possible help to perform their jobs in a better manner (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Positive perception of organizational support helps in the formation of employees’ positive attitudes toward the organization (Colakoglu, Culha, & Atay, 2010) and boosts their efforts to realize organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Literature Review

Organizational commitment (OC) as a construct helps in understanding the employees’ dedication to their organizations. Previous studies have identified the various outcomes and antecedents of organizational commitment. High organizational commitment has been found to be related to job satisfaction (Anis, Rehman, Rehman, Khan, & Humayoun, 2011), personal characteristics (Lichliter, 2015), psychological empowerment (Jha, 2011), organizational sub culture (Dey et al., 2014), and many others. Jafri (2012) expressed the views that affectively committed individuals stay in an organization till the time their efforts are rewarded and employees with continuance and normative commitment leave the employer as soon as they find better opportunities.

Coming to the antecedents of organizational commitment, Saha and Kumar (2016) were of the opinion that affective commitment relates positively to education ; continuance commitment relates positively to age, education, and tenure ; and lastly, education and tenure influence normative commitment. In other studies of Jiang (2015) and Karim (2012), it was found that perception of justice plays an imperative role in organizational commitment of the employees. Bakhshi, Kumar, and Rani (2009) and Ponnu and Chauh (2010) also found procedural justice as significantly and positively correlated with OC.

The studies have also explored the possible predictors and outcomes of POS. As per the findings of meta analysis conducted by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), fairness, support of the supervisors, rewards and favorable working conditions are the antecedents of POS. These views found support in recent studies of Saadati, Saadati, Asghari, Golkhatmi, Ghodsi, and Golkhatmi (2016), who opined that justice perception is an important indicator of organizational support. Fasolo (1995) also expressed the views that procedures adopted in decision making and active involvement of employees in decisions indicate concern and care for the employees. Further, the study by Purang (2011) also found a positive relationship of perceived organizational support with procedural justice.

Employees appraise their experiences at work in the context of organizational concern for their well-being (McKeown & Cochrane, 2012). High level of POS fulfills employees' need of identity, approval, and esteem and strengthens the expectations of reward and recognitions. Riggle, Edmondson, and Hansen (2009) opined that POS is a crucial predictor of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, attendance, role performance, and OCB (organizational citizenship behavior). Many other studies also found POS as positively allied with organizational commitment (Hakkak, Gashti, & Nawaser 2014; Kim, Eisenberger, & Baik 2016). The reason for this positive relationship lies in the norm of reciprocity. Norm of reciprocity lays down that human beings respond the way they are treated. So if an organization treats its employees as valuable and takes care of their needs and well being, then employees are ought to respond favorably to these gestures.

As mentioned above, previous researchers (viz. Bakhshi et al., 2009; McDowall & Fletcher, 2004) have reported a positive relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment and similarly there are other studies (e.g., Hakkak et al., 2014; Lew 2009) who found that perceived organizational support was positively related with organizational commitment. Further, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and reciprocity theory (Gouldner, 1960) were referred to elucidate why perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment. Perception of procedural justice affects general perception of employees - that their organizations support them - and thus promotes the employees to give back to the organization with higher commitment.

Research Gap

Many empirical research studies have explored organizational commitment in relation to perceived organizational support (viz., Benlioglu & Baskan, 2014; Lew, 2009; Mankanjee, Hartzer, & Uys, 2006; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001) and perceived organizational justice (e.g., Bakhshi et al., 2009; Masterson et al., 2000). However, a majority of these studies are in the Western context. In the Indian context, a few researches (e.g., Purang, 2011) have been conducted on organizational justice and organizational support, but we found no such study on Indian bank employees. Moreover, the study by Purang (2011) is restricted to only affective component to commitment. This study supplements the work of Purang (2011) by incorporating complete construct of organizational commitment.

This study is an endeavor to contribute to research in organizational commitment by focusing on the banking sector of a developing country, namely India. There are good reasons for basing this study in India - the non - Western culture and its banking sector. First, a majority of the commitment research has been done in Western nations (Yousaf et al., 2013). Therefore, this paper is an endeavor to generalize a Western theoretical framework in India. Secondly, focus of most of the studies conducted on banking sector is consumers' behavior (Cengiz, Kaynak, & El-Bdour, 1990; Naser & Al-Khatib, 1999). There is paucity of research related to organizational commitment, particularly, variables that modify and change the relationship between criterion and predictor variables in the banking sector of India. Thirdly, by incorporating POS as a mediator, we try to explore the link between Indian bank employees' justice perception and their commitment towards their organization using the social exchange perspective.

Objective of the Research

The prime objective of this study is to explore the relationship among procedural justice, organizational commitment, and perceived organizational support, using a mediating model.

Hypotheses

- ↪ **Hypothesis (H1)** : There is a significant positive relationship between procedural justice as perceived by bank employees and their organizational commitment.
- ↪ **Hypothesis (H2)** : There is a significant positive relationship between procedural justice as perceived by bank employees and perceived organizational support.
- ↪ **Hypothesis (H3)** : There is a significant positive relationship between organizational support as perceived by bank employees and their organizational commitment.
- ↪ **Hypothesis (H4)** : Perceived organizational support acts as a mediator in the relationship of procedural justice with organizational commitment.

Methodology

(1) Participants : Data for this research was collected from 280 employees working in private sector banks of selected cities of Northern India during August- October 2016. The sample distribution is as follows: Majority (67%) were male respondents, 72% were married, 54% held master's degree, only 25% were more than 40 years of age, and 50% of the respondents had an experience of above 5 years with the same bank.

(2) Measures

(i) Organizational Commitment : The construct was measured with a 15 - item OCQ (organizational commitment questionnaire) developed by Porter et al. (1974). A sample item stated, "I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for."

(ii) Procedural Justice : The 6-item procedural justice scale developed by Moorman (1991) was used. An example item includes "My organization's procedures allow for requests for clarification or additional information about the decision."

(iii) Perceived Organizational Support : This construct was measured using short version 8-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). An example item included, "The organization really cares about my well-being."

All the items of the study variables were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales (where 1 represents '*strongly disagree*'..... and 5 '*strongly agree*'). Cronbach's alpha values for organizational commitment, procedural justice, and perceived organizational support scales were 0.77, 0.92, and 0.75, respectively.

Analysis and Results

The Table 1 presents mean, standard deviation, reliability scores of all measures, and correlation coefficient among the variables under study. The results indicate positive correlation among all the variables. A strong

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Scores, and Correlations Among the Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3
1. Procedural Justice (<i>PJ</i>)	280	5.14	1.22	(0.92)		
2. Perceived Organizational Support (<i>POS</i>)	280	4.81	0.97	0.59*	(0.75)	
3. Organizational Commitment (<i>OC</i>)	280	4.76	0.71	0.51*	0.53*	(0.77)

Note : Cronbach's alpha coefficients given on the diagonal in parentheses. Also, * $p < .01$ (2 tailed).

Table 2. Regression Analysis Findings

Variable	Perceived Organizational Support (Unstandardized β)	Organizational Commitment (Unstandardized β)
Procedural Justice	0.44 $df = (1,279)$ $R^2 = 0.35$ Adj $R^2 = 0.34$ $F = 72.81$	
Procedural Justice		0.30 $df = (1,279)$ $R^2 = 0.26$ Adj $R^2 = 0.25$ $F = 46.90$
Perceived Organizational Support		0.39 $df = (1,279)$ $R^2 = 0.28$ Adj $R^2 = 0.27$ $F = 48.53$
Procedural Justice		0.18
Perceived Organizational Support		0.24 $df = (2,278)$

Note : $p < .01$

positive correlation is reported between *POS* and *PJ* ($R = 0.59, p < .01$). As shown in the Table 1, significant positive correlation has been found between *POS* and *OC* ($R = .53, p < 0.01$) and correlation between *PJ* and *OC* is 0.51 ($p < 0.01$). These patterns of correlations provide some kind of support for mediator analysis.

As suggested by Judd and Kenny (1981), to observe the mediating role of *POS* in the relationship of procedural justice and organizational commitment, the following three equations (regression) are used: in the first equation, *POS* (mediator variable) is regressed on *PJ* (predictor variable) ; in the second equation, *OC* (outcome variable) is regressed on *PJ* (predictor variable) ; and in the third equation, *OC* (outcome variable) is regressed on *PJ* (predictor) and *POS* (mediator variable). The results of the regression analysis are shown in the Table 2.

In the first equation, *POS* is regressed on *PJ* and is in line with our expectation, it is found that respondents' perception of procedural justice influences *POS* ($\beta = 0.44, p = .0001$). Thus, the first condition of mediation analysis given by Baron and Kenny (1986) is fulfilled that the predictor variable must influence the mediator variable. Therefore, H2 gets full support of the results. In the second equation, *OC* is regressed on *PJ* and it is observed that procedural justice (*PJ*) significantly predicts organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.30, p = .0001$). Thus, the result fulfills the second condition of mediation analysis that the predictor variable should influence the outcome variable. This leads to acceptance of H1. *OC* is also regressed on *POS* and it is found that *POS* significantly predicts *OC* ($\beta = 0.39, p = .0001$) and H3 is accepted. In the next step, *OC* is regressed on both procedural justice and perceived organizational support to study the mediating role of *POS*. After the inclusion of mediator variable (*POS*) in the equation, it can be observed in the Table 2 that *POS* has a strong effect on *OC* and the main effect of *PJ* on *OC* is reduced significantly (0.18), but is not zero. Thus, it can be inferred that *POS* partially mediates the relationship between *PJ* and *OC* ($\beta = 0.24, p = .0001$), which leads to the partial acceptance of H4. Further, the significance of a mediation effect was tested with the help of Sobel test. The test statistics (5.154, $p < .000$) indicates that *POS* significantly mediates the relationship between *PJ* and *OC*.

Discussion

There are numerous studies which indicate the role of different factors in enhancing commitment among employees to improve their work performance. But only few have studied the role of factors at the organizational level in enhancing commitment among employees working in private sector banks. In this study, we intended to fill this research gap by studying organizational commitment, procedural justice, and organizational support. Employing the reciprocity norm and social exchange viewpoint, hypotheses were developed and tested with data collected from private sector bank employees in India. The purpose of the study was to extend the literature of OC in the Indian banking sector by analyzing the relationship of procedural justice with organizational commitment and perceived organizational support; the relationship of perceived organizational support with organizational commitment; and at last, the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment.

The findings of correlation analysis indicate that there exists a positive relationship between all the variables of the study. Procedural justice and organizational commitment are found to have a positive relationship. The results are in consensus with the results of Bakhshi et al. (2009); Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng (2001); McDowall and Fletcher (2004), who also found that procedural justice is positively associated with commitment. But there are other studies (e.g., Chang, 2002; Thomas & Nagalingappa, 2012) who found that procedural justice and organizational commitment are not related.

The research results also find a positive relationship between procedural justice and POS. The positive relationship between procedural justice and POS is supported by results of Fasolo (1995) and Wayne, Shore, Bommer, and Tetrick (2002). Consistent with the results of Hakkak et al. (2014) and Kim et al. (2016), the results also indicate for the existence of positive relationship between POS and OC.

Furthermore, it is inferred that perceived organizational support partially mediates the relationship of procedural justice with organizational commitment. These finding strongly hold up the notion that procedural justice helps in developing the feeling among employees that their bank supports them. The support extended by the organization is returned by the employees by the way of organizational commitment. The existence of POS as a partial mediating factor signifies that perception of organizational support is effective for improving the positive relation of procedural justice with OC.

Implications

This study explores the relationship between perceived procedural justice, perceived organizational support, and organizational commitment. The findings of the study also suggest key implications for managers or supervisors of various organizations and banks, in particular, because commitment to the achievement of organization's goals is something which every organization looks for. This study has highlighted that procedural justice and POS both enhance organizational commitment. The results emphasize that instances of procedural justice in the organization develop the feeling of support and thus, make employees feel more committed, hinting for indirect effect of procedural justice through perceived organizational support. Various steps can be taken at the organizational level to enhance perception of justice and support. Managers and supervisors can ensure the perception of procedural justice among their subordinates by making fact based, fair decisions, and involving those who will be affected by such decisions. Support can be extended to employees by understanding their needs and emotions. HR practices like work engagement, performance appraisal, career development, and training programs are indicators of organizational support. Therefore, it can be put forth that fairness in policies and procedures helps in creating an environment of trust and support and under the norm of reciprocity, such employees would oblige to repay in terms of commitment towards their respective organizations.

Conclusion

Through testing a mediating model, finding support for it, and suggesting a significant relation between procedural justice, organizational support, and organizational commitment in the banking sector, this research has revealed that procedural justice enhances organizational commitment and perceived organizational support acts as a partial mediator in this relationship. The findings confirm that fair and supportive environment in banks may enhance commitment among employees.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The study has given meaningful implications for the banking industry. But these results should be viewed in the light of few limitations. First, the study made use of convenience sampling which may not represent the population of bank employees. Further studies can make use of other methods of sampling to make it more representative. Second, this research focused on overall organizational commitment. Efforts evaluating the impact of justice on dimensions of OC could have given richer insights. Future studies can make use of scales which facilitate the study of each dimension of OC. Thirdly, sample size for this study was 280 respondents. Further studies could use larger sample size to generalize the findings.

The study is restricted to analyzing the mediating role of POS in the relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment, so there is a scope of studying the role of other factors, that is, trust, job satisfaction, empowerment in this line of inquiry. In future studies, distributive and interactional justice should be explored and further their interaction effect can be studied on organizational commitment. Besides mediator analyses, moderating role of gender, occupation, level of reward etc. could also be explored. At last, an extension of the study can be to make a cross cultural comparison among Asian countries to generalize the Western theories in the Asian context.

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