



The Strategic Importance of Organizational Justice in Modern Organizations

OGBONNA, Ihuoma Justice¹ MUKORO, Akpomuvire^{*2}, OKEREKA Onofere Princewill³

Department of Public Administration,

Faculty of Management Science,

Delta State University, Abraka

akpomuviremukoro@delsu.edu.ng

onofereonline@gmail.com

opokereka@delsu.edu.ng

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Abstract

Organizational justice has become a central idea in explaining how fairness influences employee behavior and workplace outcomes. In today's organizations, where workers are more conscious of their rights and expectations, fairness is no longer just an ethical concern; it is a strategic requirement. This study examined the critical role of organizational justice to organizational performance, employee commitment, and long-term sustainability. The study was anchored on Organizational Support Theory (OST), which offers a powerful theoretical framework for highlighting the strategic importance of organizational justice in modern organizations. Using a historical research design, the study reviews major theories and scholarly discussions on justice in organizational life. It focuses on the dimensions of justice, while exploring how they have developed over time and been applied in practice. This approach helps to highlight the continuing relevance of fairness to current workplace issues such as diversity, talent retention, and organizational image. Organizations that prioritize fairness in their procedures, decision-making, and distribution of resources are more likely to foster trust, minimize workplace conflicts, and maintain a sustainable competitive edge. On the other hand, a lack of fairness often results in employee dissatisfaction, resistance, and damage to organizational credibility. The study concluded that organizational justice should be regarded as a strategic foundation for modern organizations. By embedding fairness into workplace practices, organizations can strengthen collaboration, stimulate innovation, and secure long-term growth in today's highly competitive environment. It is recommended, among others, that policy makers and organizational leaders should align organizational justice with strategic planning by connecting fairness initiatives to broader objectives such as improving employee retention, enhancing organizational reputation, and achieving sustainable performance.

Keywords: Justice, fairness, organizational credibility, strategy, workplace outcomes

Introduction

Although global research consistently underscores the vital role of organizational justice in shaping workplace dynamics and outcomes, variations remain in how fairness is interpreted and practiced across different countries and industries. In societies with strong institutions and transparent governance, fairness is more deeply embedded in organizational structures, resulting in higher employee trust, satisfaction, and productivity. Conversely, environments marked by weak institutional frameworks, rigid hierarchies, and poor communication often suffer from widespread perceptions of unfairness, leading to low morale, disengagement, and diminished performance.

Over the years, organizational justice has emerged as a central theme in management and organizational behavior studies, reflecting the growing recognition that fairness is indispensable for motivating employees, sustaining satisfaction, and driving organizational success. Broadly, organizational justice captures how employees perceive fairness in decision-making, organizational processes, and interpersonal treatment (Colquitt et al., 2001). With workplaces constantly adapting to globalization, technological innovations, and diverse workforce needs, justice has transitioned from being a purely ethical concern to a strategic imperative (Croppanzano et al., 2017).

In today's highly competitive landscape, human capital is a key determinant of sustainability. Employees who experience fairness are more likely to remain committed, collaborative, and innovative, thereby strengthening organizational performance (Al Aina & Atan, 2020). Conversely, unfair treatment often fuels counterproductive behaviors, higher turnover, and weakened trust in leadership (Greenberg, 1990; Hamdani & Jufrizen, 2023). Ensuring fairness, therefore, extends beyond moral responsibility to becoming a foundation for organizational resilience and effectiveness.

Organizational justice is commonly explored through three main dimensions: distributive justice, which relates to fairness in outcomes; procedural justice, which emphasizes fairness in decision-making processes; and interactional justice, which focuses on fairness in communication and interpersonal treatment (Colquitt, 2001; Hamdani & Jufrizen, 2023). Collectively, these dimensions shape how employees perceive justice and influence the culture of an organization.

While much research has examined these dimensions individually, limited studies have considered their combined effects on employee outcomes, especially within diverse cultural and organizational settings. Even fewer

investigations have focused on how justice functions in rapidly changing workplaces shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote and hybrid work models, and digital transformation. These shifts underscore the urgency of exploring how fair perceptions evolve in modern work environments and their ongoing impact on employee performance. This study, therefore, examined the strategic role of organizational justice in modern organizations, emphasizing its relevance for fostering employee engagement, workplace harmony, and sustainable competitive advantage.

Review of Related Literature

Justice is generally equated with fairness, and the two concepts are often used interchangeably. It reflects the belief that actions or decisions are morally right, based on ethical values, equity, religious principles, or legal standards. In everyday life, people are highly sensitive to issues of fairness, especially in organizational settings where employees constantly assess whether workplace decisions and practices are just (Chandrawaty & Widodo, 2021). These perceptions strongly influence their attitudes and behaviours. When fairness is evident, employees tend to react positively, showing higher motivation and commitment. Conversely, perceptions of injustice often trigger dissatisfaction, disengagement, or resistance. For this reason, fairness is a central concern for organizations, shaping employee morale, motivation, and job performance. In practice, workplace justice often encompasses fair pay, equal opportunities for career advancement, unbiased recruitment processes, and transparent decision-making systems.

Justice is also regarded as a universal norm and a fundamental human right, rooted in the dignity of individuals, who deserve fair treatment in every circumstance, including within organizations. From this perspective, organizational justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in the way they are treated compared to others. According to Hamdani and Jufrizen (2023), organizational justice consists of three major dimensions: distributive justice, which focuses on fairness in outcomes; procedural justice, which evaluates fairness in processes; and interactional justice, which emphasizes respectful communication and treatment. Several factors shape how justice is perceived in organizations. These include the nature and clarity of assigned tasks, employees' trust in their leaders, the frequency of constructive feedback, managerial integrity in applying rules fairly and consistently, and the overall organizational climate, which sets the

tone for how employees experience fairness in their workplace.

Robbins and Judge (2009) describe justice as an ethical standard that ensures rules are applied consistently and impartially, with the goal of achieving a fair balance in the distribution of benefits and costs. Within organizations, justice reflects how employees perceive fairness in their workplace. These perceptions have attracted considerable attention because of their strong influence on both individual and organizational outcomes. Justice is considered one of the most fundamental aspects of human life, serving as a foundation for growth and the advancement of societies. Since organizations operate as social systems, their stability and sustainability depend heavily on the degree to which justice is upheld among their members. Much of the research on justice has focused on how employees evaluate the fairness of what they receive from their organization compared to what they contribute (Afjeh, 2017). In this regard, justice is understood as a moral and ethical principle that emphasizes fairness, equality, law, and even faith-based values.

The concept of organizational justice was formally introduced by Greenberg in 1987. It focuses on how employees assess the fairness of organizational behaviour and how those assessments shape their own attitudes and actions. Put simply, organizational justice concerns the extent to which employees perceive fairness in their workplace. This concept has been a central topic in management, organizational behaviour, and psychology research (Parker & Kohlmeyer, 2005). Different scholars have defined organizational justice in diverse ways. Okocha and Anyanwu (2016), for example, describe it as the role of equity within the workplace, emphasizing how organizations treat their employees in line with moral and ethical standards. It also encompasses how employees accept or reject the behaviour of management. Similarly, Kalay (2016) provides a broad perspective, defining organizational justice as the evaluation of management decisions concerning responsibility delegation, empowerment, compensation, reward allocation, workplace policies, and the transparency of decision-making processes. In essence, organizational justice captures employees' perceptions of fairness across economic, social, and managerial dimensions of organizational life. Imran (2016) describes organizational justice as the fair use of procedures and processes by leaders in dealing with employees to achieve positive workplace outcomes. It focuses on how workers evaluate fairness in their treatment and how such judgments affect other aspects of their work experience. In a similar view, Ohiorenoya

and Eguavoen (2019) define organizational justice as employees' perceptions of fairness in organizational treatment, often reflected in reward systems that ensure compensation corresponds fairly with effort and performance. Zayer and Benabdellahi (2020) expand this by highlighting that organizational justice involves fairness perceptions related to processes, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment within the organization. It plays a vital role in organizational behaviour and human resource management because it influences employee attitudes and behaviours. When fairness is perceived, employees show stronger commitment, trust, satisfaction, and engagement. In contrast, perceptions of unfairness can lead to dissatisfaction, low morale, absenteeism, and turnover, thereby undermining workplace productivity (Rowland & Hall, 2012).

Nurak and Riana (2017) emphasize the moral and ethical conduct of managers in decision-making as a key determinant of organizational justice, while Timan et al. (2024) describe it as the degree to which employees feel treated equally by their superiors. In essence, it represents employees' general perceptions of fairness in organizational decisions and practices. Beyond individual attitudes, organizational justice also impacts wider organizational outcomes. A just workplace strengthens trust between employees and management, reduces conflict, and nurtures collaboration and respect. It also enhances organizational reputation, supports talent retention, and promotes long-term sustainability (Al Aina & Atan, 2020). By applying fairness across dimensions such as resource distribution, promotions, compensation, performance appraisal, and conflict resolution, organizations foster inclusive and equitable environments. This not only motivates employees and sustains engagement but also contributes to achieving strategic goals (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Kolawole et al., 2025; Timan et al., 2024).

Dimensions of Organizational Justice

According to Hamdani and Jufrizen (2023), organizational justice can be understood through four key dimensions that shape how employees perceive fairness in the workplace. These are distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice focuses on the fairness of outcomes such as pay, promotions, job security, and recognition. Employees usually assess fairness by comparing their input-output ratio (e.g., effort, skills, or experience versus salary, promotion, or rewards) with that of their colleagues (Yetgin, 2024). When resources are

shared fairly, employees experience higher job satisfaction, while unfairness can trigger dissatisfaction, low effort, or intentions to quit (Biswas & Ramaswami, 2013). Similarly, Harif et al. (2019) note that employees judge fairness by comparing their outcomes with others, and unfair results may lead them to distort their own or others' contributions. Timan et al. (2024) expand this by linking distributive justice to fairness in resource allocation, compensation, and even employee health outcomes, highlighting that unfairness often generates negative emotions and behaviors.

Procedural Justice

While distributive justice emphasizes results, procedural justice centers on the fairness of the processes used to reach those results. Transparent, consistent, and inclusive decision-making processes, such as promotion or salary review procedures, strengthen employees' trust, job satisfaction, and commitment (Azubuike & Madubochi, 2021). Conversely, when processes are perceived as biased or unfair, employees may feel stressed, disengaged, or even exhibit absenteeism. Timan et al. (2024) emphasize that fair procedures build legitimacy, encourage voluntary cooperation, and foster trust, while unfair ones generate resistance and distrust.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice concerns the quality of interpersonal treatment employees receive, focusing on respect, empathy, honesty, and dignity. Faruk (2016) stresses that fairness in supervisor-employee interactions is crucial for maintaining positive relationships. Timan et al. (2024) distinguish two elements: interpersonal justice (respectful treatment) and informational justice (honest explanations). Ajala (2015) adds that truthfulness, respect, absence of prejudice, and timely justification or apology when mistakes occur can enhance employees' sense of fairness.

Informational Justice

Informational justice deals specifically with the adequacy, transparency, and clarity of communication from management (Lünich et al., 2024). It emphasizes not only informing employees but also explaining the reason behind organizational decisions. Faruk (2016) highlights that while interactional justice focuses on *how* communication is delivered (respectfully or not), informational justice emphasizes *what* is communicated (accuracy and completeness). Marso and Anggreyani (2024) argue that clear and timely updates foster trust and psychological safety, enabling employees to voice concerns and contribute effectively. In contrast, vague or

deceptive communication damages trust and increases dissatisfaction.

When combined, these four dimensions, distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice form a comprehensive framework for understanding organizational fairness. Studies (e.g., Jung & Ali, 2017; Yoon & You, 2016) consistently show that high perceptions of justice enhance job satisfaction, loyalty, cooperation, and overall performance. Conversely, when justice is lacking, organizations face higher turnover, stress, and disengagement. Ultimately, organizational justice is essential for building a positive, committed, and productive workforce. Rizwan (2014) highlights that organizational justice is shaped by four fundamental factors: equitable compensation, transparent employee selection, merit-based promotion, and objective workplace relationships. Together, these elements form the basis of how employees perceive fairness in their organizations, directly influencing:

Equitable Compensation

Equitable compensation refers to a reward system that fairly reflects an employee's contributions, considering workload, responsibilities, experience, and skills. The principle of fairness in pay requires that individuals performing similar tasks receive comparable rewards, thereby minimizing favoritism or bias. Perceptions of justice in compensation are not only tied to measurable outputs but also to how employees interpret intent, awareness, and ethical behavior behind reward decisions. When compensation aligns with employee value, trust and commitment to the organization are strengthened.

Formal Employee Selection

A transparent and systematic recruitment process is essential in reinforcing fairness in organizations. Formal selection involves assessing candidates based on objective criteria such as qualifications, work history, skills, and personal integrity. Standardized methods like aptitude tests, reference checks, structured interviews, and background verifications are typically employed. By ensuring that hiring decisions are grounded in merit rather than personal bias, organizations build credibility and foster employee trust.

Merit-Based Promotion

Promotions serve as recognition of employee effort and performance, but they must be based on fairness to have the intended motivational effect. A merit-based promotion system advances individuals based on clear performance metrics, demonstrated competence, and organizational needs, rather than favoritism or informal influence. Fair promotion practices not

only enhance morale and job satisfaction but also signal an organization's commitment to equity, which motivates employees to strive for excellence and strengthen overall performance.

5.

6. Objective Workplace Relations

Workplace relationships that are guided by professionalism and objectivity help minimize personal biases in decision-making. While such interactions may appear detached, they are crucial in maintaining fairness, consistency, and respect for organizational rules. By prioritizing rationality over favoritism, impersonal workplace relations foster procedural justice, safeguard professional boundaries, and reduce the risk of conflicts of interest. Although they may reduce emotional closeness, they ensure decisions are transparent and credible.

The Strategic Importance of Organizational Justice in Modern Organizations

Organizational justice is a vital factor that shapes employee attitudes, performance, and overall organizational effectiveness. Research consistently shows that fairness within organizations generates a series of positive outcomes such as higher satisfaction, stronger commitment, greater readiness for change, and enhanced innovation, while reducing burnout, turnover, and counterproductive work behaviours. The key importance of organizational justice can be outlined as follows:

1.

2. Enhancing Employee Performance and Productivity

Organizational justice directly influences how well employees perform. When compensation, rewards, and promotion processes are fair and transparent, employees feel valued, which motivates them to work harder. For instance, Artatanaya and Widhari (2023) found that distributive and procedural justice improved employee performance through organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) and trust. Chandrawaty and Widodo (2021) also revealed that interactional justice, reflected in respectful treatment, was the strongest predictor of performance. Psychological empowerment further mediates this relationship, enabling employees in fair environments to contribute innovative ideas, support colleagues, and take on extra-role behaviours, thereby boosting overall productivity.

3. Promoting Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Fairness in decision-making strongly influences employees' emotional connections to their organizations. Evidence shows that organizational justice enhances job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens organizational

commitment. Using the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, Yetgin (2024) demonstrated that distributive, procedural, informational, and interactional justice predicted higher identification with the organization, leading to greater commitment and engagement. Similarly, Marso and Anggreyani (2024) found that perceptions of fairness improved job satisfaction and commitment, mediated by psychological capital and quality of working life. When employees trust that processes and outcomes are fair, they invest more emotionally and cognitively, ensuring long-term commitment.

Facilitating Organizational Change and Innovation

Resistance to change is common, but perceptions of fairness, particularly in procedural and informational justice, can reduce resistance and promote readiness for change. Kebede and Wang (2022) showed that organizational justice positively shaped employees' willingness to adapt to change in the Ethiopian Revenue and Customs Authority, with perceived organizational support playing a mediating role. Furthermore, organizational justice stimulates innovation by encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration. Akram and Dong (2019) demonstrated that all dimensions of justice, distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal, and spatial, positively influenced knowledge sharing and innovative behaviours, making fairness a catalyst for creativity and transformation.

Reducing Burnout, Turnover, and Counterproductive Behaviours

Unfair treatment in pay, promotions, or workplace interactions often leads to burnout, dissatisfaction, and higher turnover. Ji et al. (2025) revealed that low distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were linked to greater burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and stronger turnover intentions, with procedural justice having the strongest indirect effect. Unfairness also drives counterproductive work behaviours (CWBS) such as incivility or withdrawal. Conversely, perceptions of fairness reduce these behaviours, ensuring workplace stability and safety.

Strengthening Trust and Organizational Citizenship

Trust is a critical outcome of justice. When employees believe decision-making is consistent and fair, they are more likely to trust the organization, which encourages prosocial behaviours such as OCB. Syaifuddin et al. (2023) highlighted a strong link between fairness and OCB, showing that employees treated fairly are more willing to help colleagues, support organizational goals, and engage in extra-role behaviours. In sensitive environments like

healthcare, El-Sayad et al. (2014) found that higher organizational justice among physicians and nurses improved performance and service quality, underlining the importance of fairness in professional trust and teamwork.

7. Aligning Organizational Goals and Labour Relations

Organizational justice also plays a strategic role in labour relations and corporate social responsibility (CSR). By embedding fairness in policies and practices, organizations can align employee and organizational objectives while fostering cooperative relations with labour unions. Jung and Ali (2017) found that distributive and procedural justice enhanced employee attitudes toward CSR, while cooperative labour relations strengthened job satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, Yoon and You (2016) showed that CSR initiatives supported by fair organizational cultures promoted positive labour-management relations in Korean SMEs.

Thus, organizational justice is more than an HR practice; it is a cornerstone of effective management. Rooted in equity and social exchange theories, justice fosters trust, engagement, performance, and innovation while reducing negative outcomes like burnout and turnover. For organizations navigating change and global competition, embedding fairness into structures and culture is not optional but essential. Proactive justice strategies create resilient, engaged, and innovative workforces, leading to sustainable organizational success (Marso & Anggreyani, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Organizational Support Theory (OST), developed by Robert Eisenberger and his colleagues in the 1980s through their foundational work on Perceived Organizational Support (POS). OST posits that when employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they respond with stronger commitment and dedication to organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

At the heart of the theory is the concept of POS, which reflects employees' general beliefs about how supportive their organization is. When workers feel supported, they are more likely to exhibit loyalty, trust, and increased effort. Conversely, perceptions of neglect or unfair treatment can weaken motivation and lead to withdrawal behaviors (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

The theory also stresses that support from the organization fulfills employees' socio-emotional needs, such as respect, belonging, and

recognition. Meeting these needs fosters psychological attachment, encouraging workers to align their personal goals with those of the organization. In doing so, job satisfaction and performance improve (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Furthermore, OST emphasizes reciprocity; employees who feel supported often go beyond their formal job roles, engaging in discretionary efforts such as organizational citizenship behaviors. Lack of support, on the other hand, can generate stress, dissatisfaction, and higher turnover rates (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

The relevance of OST to this study lies in its connection between fairness and perceptions of support. Acts of justice, such as equitable resource allocation, transparent processes, and respectful interactions to employees that the organization values them. These signals strengthen trust and deepen their sense of belonging, which in turn boosts commitment and engagement.

In today's competitive environment, where innovation, talent retention, and organizational sustainability are vital, OST provides an important lens for understanding why justice is not just an ethical principle but a strategic asset. Fair treatment fosters positive perceptions of support, enhances organizational reputation, reduces turnover, and promotes long-term performance. Thus, OST offers a powerful theoretical framework for highlighting the strategic importance of organizational justice in modern organizations.

Methodology

This study adopted a historical research design, which is appropriate for exploring how the idea of organizational justice has developed over time and why it remains strategically important in today's organizations. The historical approach allows the researchers to trace theoretical shifts, scholarly discussions, and practical applications of organizational justice across different organizational settings. The study relies entirely on secondary sources of data. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, published books, and other credible academic works that address organizational justice. Drawing on secondary sources makes it possible to build on established knowledge and to provide a broad and critical review of how the concept of justice has been understood and applied in organizational studies. To interpret and make sense of the data collected, content analysis was used as the main method of interpretation. This process involves carefully reviewing, categorizing, and interpreting data from the collected sources to uncover common themes, patterns, and perspectives. Through this analytical approach, the study brings to light how organizational justice shapes employee

commitment, organizational effectiveness, and long-term sustainability, while also showing its continued significance in addressing the challenges of modern workplaces.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the strategic role of organizational justice and demonstrated how fairness forms the foundation of organizational effectiveness and employee well-being in contemporary workplaces. The historical review revealed that organizational justice has progressed from being seen merely as an ethical or moral concern to becoming a vital strategic requirement for maintaining competitive advantage. By examining its development through the dimensions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, the study established that fairness is crucial for building trust, strengthening organizational reputation, and improving overall performance.

The findings show that organizations that intentionally embed fairness into their systems and practices enjoy stronger employee engagement, higher retention rates, and more collaborative workplace cultures. Distributive justice, achieved through the equitable sharing of rewards and resources, directly impacts perceptions of equity and motivation. Procedural justice, which emphasizes transparency and consistency in decision-making, builds trust in leadership and reinforces organizational legitimacy. Interactional justice, centered on respectful treatment and effective communication, strengthens relationships and nurtures a supportive environment. Together, these dimensions create a comprehensive framework for driving organizational success and ensuring long-term sustainability in today's competitive environment.

Theoretically, the study reinforces the value of Organizational Support Theory (OST), which suggests that employees who feel fairly treated and supported by their organizations tend to respond with loyalty, higher commitment, and improved performance. Organizational justice thus serves as both a moral principle and a strategic mechanism for fostering reciprocity, minimizing workplace conflict, and encouraging innovation. By adopting a historical research approach, this study positioned organizational justice within broader discussions of organizational development, highlighting its function as a bridge between employee welfare and organizational objectives.

On the practical side, the findings emphasize that fairness is not simply an admirable value but an essential managerial responsibility. Organizations that overlook justice risk facing disengagement, low morale, and reputational

harm. In contrast, those who prioritize justice in resource allocation, decision-making, and workplace interactions gain long-term benefits such as attracting and retaining talent, promoting collaboration, and adapting more effectively to change. In modern, diverse workplaces where employee expectations are constantly evolving, justice emerges as the cornerstone for creating inclusive, resilient, and high-performing organizations.

In summary, organizational justice should be seen as a strategic pillar of modern management. It extends beyond resolving individual grievances to shaping a collective culture of fairness and respect that drives innovation, strengthens trust, and supports sustainable growth. For organizations aiming to balance performance goals with employee well-being, justice is not optional; it is indispensable. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Organizations should embed fairness into their decision-making by creating clear and transparent policies to guide promotions, reward systems, and disciplinary measures. Doing so will foster trust and minimize perceptions of bias. Managers should actively promote a culture of respect and openness by applying principles of interactional justice in everyday activities. This involves treating employees with dignity, offering timely and constructive feedback, and ensuring that communication across the organization is inclusive.

Policy makers and organizational leaders should align organizational justice with strategic planning by connecting fairness initiatives to broader objectives such as improving employee retention, enhancing organizational reputation, and achieving sustainable performance.

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