

## **JUSTICE IN THE WORKPLACE: THE INFLUENCE OF PROCEDURAL, DISTRIBUTIVE AND INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE ON ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE POLICE SERVICE**

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### **—Abstract —**

Organisational justice has received a fair amount of attention in business environments. The study investigated employees' perceptions of organisational justice and their effects on organisational citizenship behaviour at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, South Africa. Using a quantitative research paradigm and an exploratory research method, 226 employees were sampled through a structured questionnaire. Systematic sampling was used to ensure that the sample accurately reflected the larger population (N=457). The correlation analysis revealed that all three dimensions of organisational justice are related significantly and positively to organisational citizenship behaviour. Through regression analysis organisational justice showed a strong predictive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour. The study demonstrated that employees show a greater propensity to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour when they are able to form positive perceptions of procedural, distributive and interactional justice. The study established that there are major differences between the expectations of employees and managerial actions, which suggest that there are different areas to explore and different types of activities to undertake in order to successfully enhance employees' perceptions of organisational justice and reinforce organisational citizenship behaviour in the academy.

**Key Words:** *Organisational justice, Procedural justice, Distributive justice, Organisational commitment.*

**JEL Classification: J53**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Justice is an important concept explained in political and social domains (Heydari & Gholtash,2014:152), rooted in philosophy, political science and religion, among other disciplines, which strikes a chord with anyone who has experienced unfairness in the workplace (Jahangir, Haq & Ahmed,2005:13). Philosopher Rawls (1971:3) designates justice to be “the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought”. In history, justice is expressed as an essential need for humans’ social lives as they need fairness in every aspect of their lives. Justice is a concept that relates to our ideas about what is right and what is wrong, what is fair, how people should treat each other or the ideal for which humans should strive (Jenkins 2011:4). Justice means giving each person what he or she deserves or, in more traditional terms, giving each person his or her due (Velasques & Andre,1990:1). Justice, therefore, permeates into everyday life.

Justice no less animates people when they arrive at work (Ambrose,2002:803). We expect justice in our relationships with each other and with fellow employees, as well as in the workplace, in which we spend our working days. Justice that relates to the workplace is coined as organisational justice (OJ) and can be conceptualised on different dimensions. Justice may be difficult or impossible to achieve in every case, but it is nonetheless a foundation and a concept in which those in a social exchange relationship share a belief, even if they disagree about the application and meaning thereof.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on the social exchange theory (SET). Blau (1964:4) defines the SET as a theory of social interactions and interpersonal relations. One of the basic tenets of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trust, loyalty and mutual commitments. In order to do so, parties must abide by certain rules of exchange. Rules of exchange form a “normative definition of the situation that forms among or is adopted by the participants in an exchange relationship” (Emerson,1976:351). In this way, rules and norms of exchange are the “guidelines” of the exchange process (Cropanzano & Mitchell,2005:875). Thus, the use of the SET in models of organisational behaviour is framed based on the exchange rule or principle the researcher will rely upon. West and Turner (2007:207) state that the SET assumes that relationships are interdependent. The exchange in the relationship is usually voluntary and often occurs between two parties, especially between an employer and employee (Badu & Asumeng,2013:144). The connection between OJ and organisational citizenship

behaviour (OCB) might sit well within this theory as employees might perform OCB in order to reciprocate fair treatment offered to them by the organisation.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Organisational justice**

Moorman (1991:846) defined OJ as the term used to describe the role of fairness as it directly relates to the workplace. OJ is concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their working environment and the ways in which those determinants influence other work-related activities. In literature, OJ has been conceptualised based on three dimensions, namely procedural, distributive and interactional justice (Ahmadi, Daraei, Rabiei, Salamzadeh & Takallo,2012:22).

##### **3.1.1 Procedural justice**

Procedural justice can be defined as the fairness of the procedures used to determine the outcomes that employees receive (Folger & Greenberg,1985:143). Moorman (1991:845) defined procedural fairness as “the fairness of the procedures used in determining employee outcomes”. When employees perceive that the treatment they receive is based on fair procedures in determining employee outcome, an employee may tend to show better performance such as OCB. (Badu *et al.*,2013:147; Heydari *et al.*,2014:155; Rauf,2014:125).

##### **3.1.2 Distributive justice**

Distributive justice can be defined as people’s perception of the fairness of outcomes (benefits or punishment) as well as their evaluations of the end state of the allocation process. This concept refers to the fairness of outcomes that people receive in the workplace for compensation such as pay or promotion opportunities (Cropanzano & Greenberg,1997:320).

##### **3.1.3 Interactional justice**

Interactional justice goes beyond the fairness of job outcomes, which is related to distributive justice, and fairness of organisational procedures, which is related to procedural justice. Interactional justice explains the unfair and fair treatment in the relationship (Rauf,2014:125) and can be defined as the elements of how decision makers treat their people with regards to the adequacy with which organisational formal decision making is explained to employees (Ibrahim & Perez,2014:46). Badu *et al.* (2013:147) found that interactional justice will

significantly account for more variance and will be related positively to OCB. Noruzy, Shatery, Rezazadeh and Hatami-Shirkouhi (2011:844) found that the relationship between interactional justice and OCB is statistically significant.

### **3.2 Organisational citizenship behaviour**

Organ (1988:4) defined OCB as individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of an organisation. Discretionary behaviour is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, in terms of the person's employment contract with the organisation. The behaviour is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is generally not understood as punishable.

The fairness perception may influence OCB by prompting employees to define their relationship with the organisation as one of social exchange, since social exchange exists outside strict contracts and the exchange tends towards ambiguity, allowing for discretionary, prosocial acts by the employee (Moorman,1991:846). When employees perceive a fair working environment, they are likely to respond in accordance with social exchange and perform more OCBs. Kar and Tewari (1999:424) refer to five dimensions of OCB, which include altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue.

Previous studies show that all OJ dimensions, distributive, procedural and interactional justice, are related positively to OCB (Moorman,1991:851, Chegini,2009:176, Goudarzvandchegini,2011:46). These studies indicate that the decision to display OCB may be a result of the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she has been treated fairly by the organisation. The results are consistent with the SET in that employees who perceive unfairness may elect to reduce their OCBs, whereas employees who perceive fairness will choose to display OCB and see it as a contribution to ensure the effective functioning of the organisation. These findings are also consistent with the view of Organ (1988) that fairness may influence OCB in the sense that it is not enforceable in terms of the role or job description of the employee, but it allows for the social exchange between the employee and the organisation, which is voluntary and beneficial for the effective functioning of the organisation.

#### **4. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Given that the South African Police Service (SAPS) employees play an integral role in the protection, safety and security of the population, their own perceptions of OJ and OCB become important in the workplace. A happy workforce is a productive workforce. If SAPS employees feel that they are treated fairly in the workplace, they may display positive citizenship behaviours. However, statistics from the SAPS Annual Report (SAPS,2012-2013) show that this is not the case as 537 disputes were referred to the Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council (SSSBC) for resolution during the 2012/13 financial year. The outcome of these resolutions indicated that 198 were unfair labour practice disputes, 249 were unfair dismissal disputes and 90 were related to unilateral change (without consultation of the affected employee) and collective agreements. In addition to these 537 disputes, there were 362 grievances referred to the Joint Grievance Resolution Team (JGRT), of which 341 were resolved and did not escalate into disputes. The high number of disputes that related to unfair labour practices and unfair dismissal might indicate that, in many instances, employees of the SAPS are not always treated fairly within the working environment.

Researchers have largely neglected the influence of procedural, distributive and interactional justice on OCB, and very few studies have been conducted. There is a gap in the research in the sense that research has not been done before in the SAPS environment pertaining to the influence of distributive, procedural and interactional justice on OCB.

#### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the OJ dimensions and OCB, a quantitative approach within the functionalist paradigm was applied in the study, as it entails explaining a phenomenon by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically-based methods (Muijs,2011:1).

##### **5.1 Population and sample**

For the purpose of this study, the target population was restricted to employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl. It comprised individual male and female managers, permanent employees of the SAPS Academy, Paarl. The target population was N = 457. Probability sampling was used in the study and a comparison of past research studies (historical evidence method) was used to choose the size of the sample. Based on the population of 457, with every second employee selected, a

sample size of 226 was deemed appropriate for this particular study. The chosen sample size was feasible and large enough to provide a good representation of employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl.

## **5.2 Instrumentation and data collection**

A survey method was used to collect the data by distributing questionnaires among employees of the SAPS Academy, Paarl. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A solicited demographic information from respondents including income, gender, marital status, age, education level and employment history. Section B focused on procedural justice. Section C focused on distributive justice. Section D focused on interactional justice. Section E focused on employees' OCB. Questions for sections B, C and D were adopted from Niehoff and Moorman (1993:538). Questions for Section E were adopted from Jung and Yoon (2012:376). Close ended questions, which are more efficient and less time consuming for respondents were used. In the study, a seven-point Likert scale was used for section B, C, D and E.

## **6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Sample composition**

There were more males (n=125; 55.3%) in the study compared to females (n=101; 44.7%). The majority of the participants were single respondents (n=127; 56.2%) compared to married participants (n=99; 43.8%). The majority of respondents were between 25 and 35 years of age (n=131; 58.0%), followed by respondents who were between 36 and 45 years of age (n=50; 22.1%), respondents between 46-55 years of age (n=32; 14.2%), respondents over 55 years of age (n=8; 3.5%) and respondents who are under 25 years of age (n=5; 2.2%). The majority of respondents (n=115; 50.9%) are in possession of a grade 12 qualification, with others in possession of a certificate in policing (n=42; 18.6%), a degree or diploma (n=39; 17.3%), honours or B-Tech qualification (n=20; 8.8%) or other qualification (n=10; 4.4%). The other qualifications include the following: D-Tech (n=1), M-Tech (n=1), National Certificates, but not in policing (n=3) and qualifications below grade 12 (n=5). The majority of respondents (n=100; 44.2%) have been employed by the SAPS for more than nine years.

## 6.2 Correlation among the study constructs

Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to measure the degree of linear association between constructs (Oleckno,2008:241). This was necessary in order to establish the linear association among the constructs. The strength of the relationship between procedural justice, distributive justice, interactional justice and OCB was examined. Table 1 provides the correlations amongst constructs.

**Table 1: Correlations amongst constructs**

Constructs	Procedural justice	Distributive justice	Interactional justice	OCB
Procedural justice	1			
Distributive justice	.393**	1		
Interactional justice	.629**	.471**	1	
OCB	-0.32	.120	.049	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Positive correlations were found between procedural justice and distributive justice ( $r= 0.393$ ;  $p<0.000$ ). This indicates that if employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, perceive fairness of the process by which decisions are made, they will perceive fairness in the distribution of resources among the employees. This is in congruence with the findings of Folger and Greenberg (1985:143) whose study reveals that fairness of procedures provides employees with information about the rules of the relationship, *inter alia* how the resources will be distributed.

Positive correlations were found between procedural justice and interactional justice ( $r= 0.629$ ;  $p<0.000$ ). This indicates that if employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, perceive fairness of the process by which decisions are made, employees will experience fairness of treatment during the enactment of procedures when management makes job decisions. These findings are accentuated by Abasi, Mohammadipour and Aidi (2014:133) who found that when employees are treated with a degree of politeness, dignity and respect by authorities who are their superiors, procedural and interactional justice seem to prevail in determining justice outcomes.

Procedural justice is associated negatively with OCB ( $r=-.032$ ;  $p<0.630$ ) meaning that employees who do not perceive fairness pertaining to the decision-making process by management are more likely not to display behaviour that promotes the effective and efficient functioning of the organisation. This is acquiescent with the findings of the Rezaeian and Rahimi (2008:69) study, which reveals that when

employees perceive that organisational procedures are true, suitable and fair, their behaviour has a greater propensity towards OCB.

Positive correlations were found between distributive justice and interactional justice ( $r= 0.471$ ;  $p<0.000$ ). This indicates that if employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, perceive fairness of the distribution of resources, employees will experience fairness of treatment during the enactment of procedures when management makes decisions concerning their jobs. This is affirmed by Abasi *et al.* (2014:133) who state that explanations provided to employees must convey information about why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain manner.

Weak positive correlations were found between distributive justice and OCB ( $r=0.120$ ;  $p<0.071$ ) meaning that employees who perceive fairness pertaining to the distribution of resources by management might display behaviour that promotes the effective and efficient functioning of the SAPS Academy, Paarl. Rauf (2014:125) affirms that individuals with a positive perception of distributive justice would show dedication to the development of the organisation, pay attention to their own development and would pay attention to their work.

Weak positive correlations were found between distributive justice and OCB ( $r=0.049$ ;  $p<0.465$ ), meaning that employees who perceive just treatment during the enactment of procedures, might display behaviour that promotes the effective and efficient functioning of the SAPS Academy, Paarl. Heydari *et al.* (2014:152), who found that there is a significant relationship between interactional justice and OCB, also established similar findings.

### 6.3 Regression analysis

Regression analysis was performed to test whether the independent variables, namely procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice predict the dependent variable OCB. Table 2 represents the regression analysis regarding the dimensions of OJ and OCB. In total, the three factors (procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice) explained approximately 2.4 percent ( $R^2 = 0.024$ ) of the variance in employees OCBs at the SAPS Academy, Paarl. In terms of the beta weights, distributive justice ( $\beta = .141$ ) is the strongest predictor of OCB, followed by interactional justice ( $\beta = .063$ ), *inter alia* the absence of distributive and interactional justice cause employees to display behaviour that does not support OCB. Procedural justice had a beta weight of  $-.127$ , which indicates that the absence of procedural justice negatively impacts on OCB. A

possible explanation for this finding might be that procedures are determined by rules, policies and regulations, it is not a managerial decision and the employees at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, accept it in such a light. This is concurrent with the findings of Balogun, Ojedokun and Owoade (2012:4) who found that the dimensions of OJ are linked to the concept of fairness and have implications for employees' behaviour as a result of the employee's perceptions of just treatment.

**Table 2: Regression analysis: dimensions of organisational justice to organisational citizenship behaviour**

		<b>Dependent variable: OCB</b>			
<b>Independent variables: dimensions of OCB.</b>	Unstandardised		Standardised		Sig
	coefficients		coefficients		
<b>Dependant variable: OCB</b>	B	Std. error	Beta	t	
Procedural justice	-.104	.071	-.127	-1.472	.142
Distributive justice	.093	.050	.141	1.853	.065
Interactional justice	.046	.067	.063	.696	.487
R=.155; R <sup>2</sup> =.024; Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =.011					

#### 6.4 Reliability and validity of measurement constructs

The reliability results are provided in Table 3. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011:177) state that Cronbach alpha coefficients above 0.7 generally indicate a satisfactory reliability scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficient test provided a satisfactory indication of reliability of the instrument with Cronbach alpha values varying from 0.827 to 0.946.

**Table 3: Overall reliability of the instrument**

<b>Sections of the questionnaire (scale)</b>	<b>Cronbach alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>Number of items</b>
Section B: Procedural justice	.874	5
Section C: Distributive justice	.854	4
Section D: Interactional justice	.946	9
Section E: OCB	.827	4

Construct validity was ascertained through pre-testing and pilot testing of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested and reviewed by a panel of experts, including experts in human resource management, to check for suitability of questions, and whether the questions measure the relevant constructs in the study. Minor changes were made on item wording and phrasing. In the pilot test stage, a further assessment was made in order to determine if changes had to be made to the questionnaire pertaining to the removal of items, addition of items,

rewording and rephrasing of questions through the computation of the Cronbach alpha reliability and item-total correlations.

In the pilot test stage, all items-total correlations were  $> 0.50$  and the Cronbach alpha values were above the acceptable threshold value 0.70, thus affirming construct validity of the scale items.

Predictive validity of the measuring instrument was ascertained through linear regression analysis of scale items. The results of the regression analysis conducted for this study indicate that the dimensions of OJ account for approximately 2.4 percent of the variance in OCB, thus affirming validity.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The regression models indicate that OJ, DJ and IJ make a small contribution to OCB among employees in the Academy. This may be attributed to the low level of morale of employees in the SAPS. Furthermore, the correlation analysis show an inverse relationship between procedural justice and OCB. This relationship affirms that low levels of procedural justice as perceived by employees in the SAPS leads to low levels of OCB. These perceptions are further corroborated by the large number of disputes and grievances reported in the SAPS. In order to address the negative perceptions of OJ it is of paramount importance for the SAPS Academy, Paarl, to engage policy makers, core management and employees to assist with the formulation of a strategy to ensure employees are treated fairly in terms of the various components of OJ, which may subsequently increase the ability of the academy to provide excellent services.

It is of utmost importance to change employees' perceptions about procedural justice, as it has strong effects on attitudes about the organisation or authorities within the organisation (Folger & Greenberg, 1985:143). It is recommended that the barriers below should be addressed as they hinder effective procedural justice practises.

- **Accurate and complete information for job decisions**

It is recommended that an information database should be created at a central point, where employees could provide such information that could then be made available to managers when decisions should be made. The maintenance and expansion of such database is essential to ensure that information remains relevant and current at all times to avoid job decisions based on outdated information.

- **Information dissemination on job decisions**

Immediate supervisors must be sensitised on the importance of keeping employees informed of the reasons for the decisions that were taken, as well as the implications of such decisions for the employee concerned and other employees and not only informing them on the decision outcome.

Based on the means for distributive justice it is further recommended that the rewards programme at the SAPS Academy, Paarl, be reviewed by core management to ensure that reward allocation is practised successfully. Employees determine whether they have been treated fairly at work by comparing their own payoff ratio (such as pay or status) to inputs (such as effort or time) to the ratio of their co-employees (Bakhshi, Kumar & Rani, 2009:146).

A code of good practice – communication should be developed for the academy, in which crucial aspects of the communication process are highlighted. This document should then be discussed with and circulated to all managers and immediate supervisors. Interactional justice practices should then include these aspects, such as displaying social sensitivity and treating employees with dignity, respect and acceptable interpersonal treatment during interactions and encounters (Al-Zu'bi, 2010:103).

It is further recommended that future studies include a comparative study in order to test for differences between groups to give a clearer indication whether or not values of a particular variable differ between two or more groups through an analysis of variance. Researchers need to investigate the possible effect of biographical attributes on employees' perceptions of OJ and OCB. A broader national sample would also offer additional insights which are not only limited to one academy.

## **8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study advances and contributes to the literature on OJ and OCB, especially with regards to the current understanding of what OJ practices are being used within a policing context at the SAPS Academy, Paarl. However, as with every study of this nature, the study was subject to certain limitations that may pave the way for further research opportunities, as presented below.

One might expect that certain biographical traits of this study such as gender, marital status, age, education level, income and length of service in the SAPS would have an influence on how employees perceive OJ and OCB. A comparative

study in order to test for differences between groups could give a clearer indication whether or not values of a particular variable differ among groups through an analysis of variance. Researchers need to investigate the possible effect of biographical attributes on employees' perceptions of OJ and OCB. Despite the positive relationship among the dimensions of OJ and OCB, the fact remains that procedural, distributive and interactional justice practices should be transparent and visible to employees.

The sample was drawn from employees stationed at the SAPS Academy, Paarl. This academy falls under the division Human Resource Development of the SAPS. There are 22 academies that contribute to the educational development of employees of the SAPS. A broader national sample would have offered additional insights not limited to only one academy.

Because the data were collected from only one academy, the results obtained in this study, therefore, cannot be generalised to all the existing divisions within the SAPS.

## **9. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The literature reveals that justice affects all employees and strikes a chord with anyone who has experienced unfairness (Jahangir, Haq & Ahmed, 2005:13). This is evidenced by the low level of predictive relationships between PJ, DJ and IJ and OCB in the study. Yet, maintaining justice in relation to OCB in the policing context has been overlooked as far as research in any policing environment is concerned. This study aimed at increasing managers' awareness of the influence of OJ on OCB. In addition, the findings of this study support the view that employees' perceptions of procedural, distributive and interactional justice influence the way in which they behave within the organisation and has a definite impact on OCB. The study established that there are major differences between the expectations of employees and managerial actions, which suggest that there is a large area to explore and different types of activities to undertake in order to successfully enhance employees' perceptions of OJ and reinforce OCBs.

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