Organizational Justice: A Multi-Dimensional Study of Justice at the Workplace

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of organizational justice on the innovative work behavior of employees in the indirect effect of serial mediation of perceived organizational support and career growth opportunities. It also evaluates the moderating effect of authentic leadership on the correlation between organizational justice and perceived organizational support in the FMCG sector of Pakistan. In an ever-growing competitiveness, the organizations have to face certain challenges and to plan mitigation strategies in an innovative way. This explanatory research uses Adam's (1965) Equity Theory and quantitative approach for the collection of data from the respondents selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The results validate the impact of organizational justice on the innovative work behavior of employees in the indirect effect of serial mediation of perceived organizational support and career growth opportunities. The findings of the study provide actionable insights for improving organizational practices and leadership strategies to promote a supportive work environment.

Key Words: Authentic Leadership, Career Growth Opportunities, Equity Theory, FMCG Sector, Innovative Work Behavior, Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support, Structure Equation Modelling

Introduction

The Organizational Justice (OJ) terminology has made significant strides in its contribution to the success of organizations (Chang et al., 2024; Khuzwayo et al., 2023; Mustafa, 2023; Sheeraz et al., 2021). As a fundamental aspect of human behavior, justice is a crucial issue in the life of organizations (Adams, 1965). The subject has been studied in depth by a multitude of academics, including political scientists, psychologists and managers. According to research by Lu & Guy (2018) and Colquitt et al. (2001), OJ is one of the subjects that is studied across a range of disciplines, including organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management.

In an ever-growing competitiveness, the organizations have to face certain challenges and to plan mitigation strategies in an innovative way. The threat of employees' dissatisfaction and the challenge of turnover intention go hand in hand and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the organizations to carve out strategies for the retention of competent and trained human resource (Boselie, & van der, 2024; Fatima et al., 2020; Chan, 2019). Several research studies indicate that an elevated degree of OJ has a direct and positive relationship with how an organization performs in an outcome-oriented manner with added job commitment, job satisfaction, positive and innovative work behavior and sustainable career development of employees (Chang et al., 2024; Khuzwayo et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2015; Dundar & Tabancali, 2012; Silva & Caetano, 2014). Conversely, a reduced level of OJ casts adverse effects on the psychological well-being of employees, leading to anxiety, high attrition rates, and retaliatory behavior (Silva & Caetano, 2014). In such cases, organizational sustainability is a major causality.

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is a critical contributor to Pakistan's economy which comprises multinational and local corporations, such as Unilever, Nestle, and Procter & Gamble (Pakistan, 2023). The FMCG products are generally segregated in three categories of consumer packaged goods: a) food and beverages "groceries and carbonated soft drinks", b) home care "cleaning

supplies" and c) personal care "toothpaste and deodorant" and these tend to be relatively low-value items; however, they are an integral part of country's economy as they are frequently purchased and utilized (CLARITY, 2024; Pakistan, 2023; Liczmańska-Kopcewicz & Wiśniewska, 2019). A few studies have investigated OJ in Pakistan's FMCG sector to check its impact on organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Khan et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2019). Khan et al., (2022) examined the link between OJ and organizational citizenship behavior in Pakistan's context, discovering a significant positive relationship between the two variables. In spite of the considerable influence of OJ on employee outcomes in the FMCG industry, there are several obstacles that impede the adoption of equitable policies and practices. For instance, in a study conducted by Qureshi et al., (2019) on the FMCG sector in Pakistan, it was discovered that the absence of employee's commitment and job satisfaction had negative effect on the job performance, and implementation of just policies and practices can play a significant role to cater to such significant influence and challenges.

The role of OJ has been recommended as a critical component in promoting the innovative work behavior of employees (Halawa et al., 2023; Akram et al., 2020). Earlier studies have indicated that employees who regard their organization as just and equitable are more prone to participate in innovative work practices. However, there is a gap regarding the particular mechanisms that form the basis of OJ with the innovative work behavior (IWB) of employees in the FMCG industry of Pakistan. Also, the potential role of perceived organizational support (POS) and career growth opportunities (CGO) as serial mediators between OJ and employees' IWB may also influence the relationship between all the variables of the present study. Moreover, authentic leadership (AL) may enhance the effects of OJ on POS by strengthening employees' identification with their leaders and their organizations. Given the above, this research examines the least occurring variable, that is, employees' IWB that has not yet been made part of any indigenous research in relation to the study of OJ in a serially mediated relationship with POS and CGOs. Specifically,

The current study is significant because it uses all forms of OJ—distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational— to analyze the phenomena, which is a model that has not been applied in an indigenous setting of OJ study before in relation to the variable of the study. Results of this study provides crucial information to the management of the FMCG industry on how to foster IWB in its employees through the intervention of AL and POS. Investigating how the notion of OJ is viewed and used in the organizational structures of developing countries is crucial because there is a substantial cultural gap between developed and developing nations (Ranjit, 2022; Wong, Ngo, & Wong, 2006). Given that there is little empirical evidence for OJ practices in FMCG industry. Findings of the study will fulfil the critical need to describe the notion of OJ in Pakistan's FMCG sector in order to bridge this gap.

Literature Review

The foundation of justice is deep rooted in the earlier contributions of eminent philosophers "such as, Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, and Mill" (Shah, 2018). Multiple studies mentioned the viewpoints of these scholars along with their ideologies regarding justice by stating that Aristotle viewed justice as "what is fair and lawful" (Mika & Scheyvens, 2022). Multiple researchers referred to the term OJ as it caters to perceptions of employees regarding treatment of their employers as well as either the rewards/ outcomes are realistic, unbiased, and as per the ethical and moral standards (Chang et al., 2024; Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007). It is also linked to how employees perceive fair treatment in their organization (Ölçer & Coşkun, 2024; Khuzwayo et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2015). Justice can be ensured throughout an organization by promoting actions that align with justice (Ohana, 2014). In recent times, the concept of OJ has multiple extensions, initially it comprised of two dimensions (distributive and procedural), then extended to three (interactional justice) that further extended to four dimensions (Interpersonal and Informational), which confirmed OJ as a multi-dimensional concept (Colquitt & Shaw, 2005).

Unfair practices may threaten organizational survival. Colquitt et al. (2018) and Lin (2007) argue that when organizational fairness and justice are present, employees' sustainability and IWB are encouraged and employees become more creative. Numerous studies examined the need for and impact of OJ as well as its benefits and drawbacks for employees related outcomes such as compensation, distribution of rewards and recognition (Ouyang et al., 2015). Jakopec & Susanj (2014) found out that positive perceptions of OJ result in positive behavior and actions.

The notion of POS is deemed vital in understanding the association between OJ and employees' IWB. Research has employed POS as a forecaster of employees' work behaviors including job satisfaction, work performance, and turnover intention (Maan et al., 2020). POS has been examined as a mediator between several variables (Kebede, & Wang, 2022), but there is a scarcity of research on its role as a mediator between OJ and employees' IWB. However, this study highlights the role of POS as a mediator between OJ and employees' IWB and serially mediated by the CGO.

OJ is crucial for employees' IWB, but CGOs are also important for organizational innovative ventures like production, services or strategies. Therefore, it makes sense to assert that IWB is linked to POS and potential opportunities of career growth in an organization. CGOs improve innovative ability and engagement of employees and result in better organizational performance (Yesil & Dereli, 2013; Liu & Phillips, 2011). OJ and personal outcomes like job happiness, employee retention, job engagement, and IWB are linked to leadership (Khuzwayo et al., 2023; Sheeraz et al., 2021). The correlation between OJ and leadership in cultures other than the United States is still mainly unknown (Sheeraz et al., 2021; Pillai, 1999). However, as globalization increases, managers must learn how to effectively lead multicultural teams. For this reason, the current study also examines the effects of AL on OJ and POS leading towards IWB.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

In the context of OJ, various theories such as Blau's (1964) Social Exchange Theory (SET), Rawls' (1971) Theory of Justice, Deci & Ryan's (1985) Self-determination Theory, Adams's (1965) Equity Theory, Fairness Theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, 2001) and Psychological Contract Theory, were considered. However, for the present research, Adam's (1965) Equity Theory has been applied because it is the most appropriate theory for covering all aspects of the proposed variables in connection with moderators and mediators of the study.

Equity Theory

Adams' (1965) Equity Theory underscores the importance of justice and organizational factors in shaping employees' perception of their relationship with their employer and work. The concept emphasizes the importance of maintaining an equitable equilibrium between the contributions made by an employee like diligent effort, expertise, compliance, eagerness, and others, and the outcomes they receive such as remuneration, perks, acknowledgment, and nonmonetary incentives. The correlation between OJ and dependent variable, namely employees' IWB, aligns with this Theory because according to Akram et al., (2020), employees are more likely to sustain and exhibit innovative behavior in response to the equitable treatment provided by their employer. Similarly, authentic leaders have the ability to significantly influence how employees perceive justice within the framework of Adam's Equity Theory.

Drawing from the Equity Theory literature, it appears that POS and CGOs can serve as valuable resources to motivate employees to respond to the organization with IWB. Employees who enjoy a high degree of POS are anticipated to reciprocate by investing their energies back into the organization innovatively and may be less inclined to engage in conflicting behavior.

Research Model and Hypothesis

In order to explain the effect of OJ on IWB, a conceptual model indicating relationship between dependent and independent variables along with serial mediation and moderation, has been postulated in the following Figure 1:
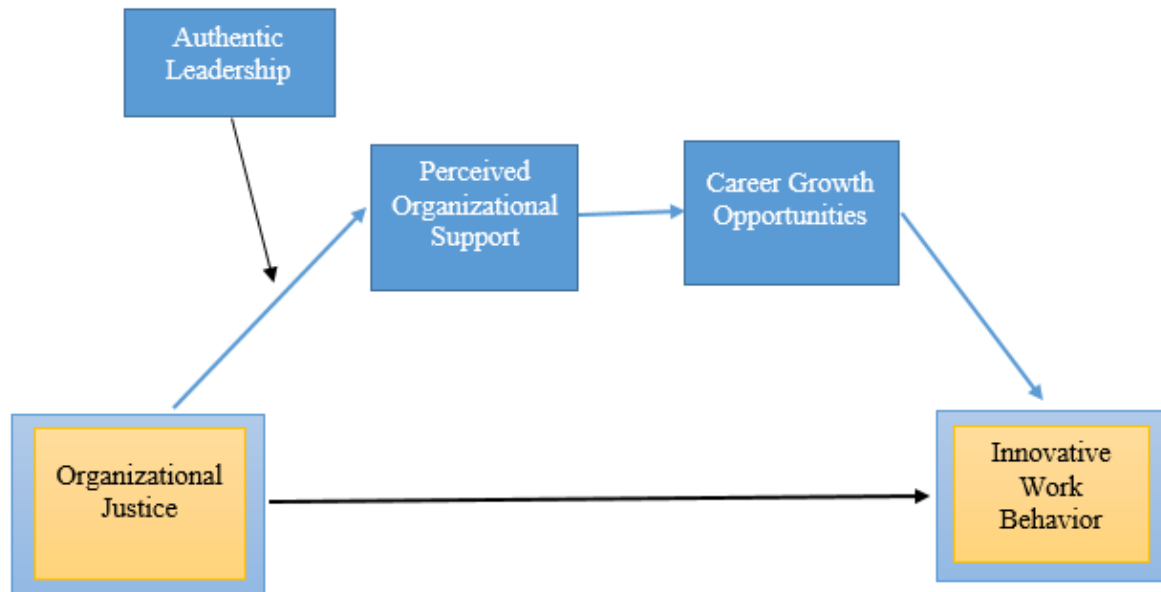

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of the Study

Given the review of literature, the present study hypothesizes as follows:

H_{01}:   Organizational justice positively associates with the innovative work behavior of employees

H_{02}:   Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between organizational justice and innovative work behavior of employees

H_{03}:   Perceived organizational support and career growth opportunities serially mediate the relationship between organizational justice and innovative work behavior of employees

H_{04}:   Authentic leadership moderates the association between organizational justice and perceived organizational support

Material and Methods

The present study examines the impact of OJ on employees' IWB in the FMCG industry of Pakistan. This research considers the moderating influence of AL as well as the serially mediating effect of POS and CGOs. The choice of paradigm depends on the objectives of the study. Hence, the current study employed the positivist paradigm by taking into account the present research requirements. According to Crotty (1998), positivism is defined as the research philosophy that regards observable evidence as the sole type of scientific results that may be supported. A quantitative research approach was employed in order to design the methodology and data collection. To collect data from workers of eight (08) FMCG companies of Punjab, Pakistan particularly through multi-stage sampling, a close-ended questionnaire was used, which consisted of two sections. There were 35 questions in total, in which 3 questions consisted of demographic section, that is, section one, and 32 were related to section two. A five point Likert scale was used for section two. Then, collected data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS to examine demographic information and structural equation modeling (SEM). After careful screening, 1035 responses of workers were found to be valid. In the context of this study, "workers" refer to all employees who are involved in the operational and production processes within FMCG

companies. This includes all production line managers, quality control inspectors, maintenance technicians, warehouse staff, personnel responsible for distribution and delivery, packaging staff and support staff. The general demographic characteristics comprised gender, age and years of work experience of the respondents, details are shown in the Table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1
Distribution of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	766	74%
Female	269	26%
Total	1035	100%

Table 1 shows that 74% of the respondents were male whereas 26% respondents were female.

Table 2
Distribution of Age Range

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage %
Below 20 years	143	13.8%
Between 20 to 35 Years	670	64.7%
Between 36 to 50 Years	157	15.1%
Above 50 Years	65	6.2%
Total	1035	100%

Table 2 indicates that 13.8% of the respondents' age group was below 20 years, 64.7% of the respondents age was between 20 to 35 years, 15.1% had age ranging between 36 to 50 years while 6.2% respondents' age ranged above 50 years.

Table 3
Distribution of Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage %
Less than 1 year	89	8.6%
1 to 5 years	531	51.3%
6 to 10 years	211	20.3%
More than 11 years	204	19.7%
Total	1035	100%

Table 3 shows that 8.6% of the total respondents had work experience of less than 1 year, 51.3% respondents had a work experience ranging between 1 to 5 years, 20.3% of the workers had the experience ranging between 6 to 10 years while 19.7% respondents had work experience of more than 11 years.

Results and Discussion

Reliability and Validity

After the demographic data were descriptively analyzed, psychometric properties of the data were examined in terms of reliability and validity of the survey instrument. In order to assess the internal consistency and reliability of constructs, Cronbach's alpha was computed. Reliability of the questionnaire has been shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Cronbach's Alpha Results of Questionnaire (Reliability Statistics)

Factor Label	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
OJ	11	.932
AL	8	.914
POS	5	.836

CGO	4	.835
IWB	4	.877
Combined	**32**	**.963**

Strong data reliability was demonstrated by the five dimensions' reliability, which was significantly higher than the suggested threshold value of 0.70 (Sekaran, 2000). A high degree of internal consistency and reliability among the items is indicated by the overall Cronbach's alpha value of all variables, which is 0.963. Because of this, all alpha (α) values are more than (>) 0.70, indicating a high degree of correlation and interchangeability among the items.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To see if the observed variables adequately correlated, i.e. met reliability and validity criteria, EFA was conducted. The KMO of Sampling Adequacy with Varimax Rotation is used to filter out problematic items within the survey. The KMO was found to be 0.955 and an estimated Chi-Square value of 24364.105 with 496 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000 was obtained by Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicating that the variables in the dataset were adequately correlated for factor analysis. The quality of the data and the suitability of applying factor analysis techniques for further research are strongly supported by these results. (Table 5).

Table 5
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.955
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	24364.105
	Df	496
	Sig.	.000

The Total Variance Explained by Principal Component Analysis, which catered to all of the chosen criteria, which included eigenvalues more than 1.0, explained variance percentages of each component greater than 3%, and proof of a single factor in parallel analysis. The cumulative variance of the five factors was 66.26% and that the eigenvalues of all the extracted components were greater than 1.

For the present research, the loadings of 32 items corresponding to the five study variables was checked. Variables whose factor loading was less than 0.5 were suppressed during the initial factor loading procedure. The five factors, which were extracted in the pattern matrix (Table 6), were used for further analysis. Terms measuring the same construct exhibited high construct loadings, i.e. suggesting adequate convergent validity. All 32 items of the questionnaire loaded above 0.5 and under each of the five variables specified in the questionnaire (Table 6).

Table 6
Factor Loading, Maximum Likelihood Extraction

	Component				
	OJ	AL	CGO	IWB	POS
OJ1	.689				
OJ2	.757				
OJ3	.693				
OJ4	.761				
OJ5	.800				
OJ6	.829				
OJ7	.868				
OJ8	.702				
OJ9	.792				
OJ10	.783				
OJ11	.702				

AL 1	.740		
AL 2	.818		
AL 3	.825		
AL 4	.805		
AL 5	.727		
AL 6	.796		
AL 7	.775		
AL 8	.776		
POS 1			.814
POS 2			.673
POS 3			.690
POS 4			.812
POS 5			.723
CGO 1	.815		
CGO 2	.881		
CGO 3	.743		
CGO 4	.739		
IWB 1		.833	
IWB 2		.862	
IWB 3		.839	
IWB 4		.834	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization

While performing Structure Equation Modeling (SEM), after EFA, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to prove the convergent and discriminant validity of the extracted constructs using AMOS.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was performed using AMOS. Crucial psychometrics of CFA are construct validity (measured by convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability (measured by composite reliability); yet, CFA must confirm and validate the constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Composite reliability evaluates the internal consistency of the latent factors in the model. A high CR value (>0.7) denotes good reliability of the measurement model, hence in present study, CR for all five extracted factors is above 0.70 (table 7).

Table 7
Construct Reliability and Validity (Model Validity Measures - Discriminant and Convergent Validity)

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	OJ	AL	CGO	POS	IWB
OJ	0.925	0.754	0.704	0.929	**0.744**				
AL	0.915	0.773	0.704	0.916	0.839***	**0.757**			0.635***
CGO	0.849	0.786	0.595	0.865	0.707***	0.717***	**0.765**		0.615***
POS	0.725	0.771	0.696	0.740	0.834***	0.797***	0.772***	**0.686**	0.649***
IWB	0.878	0.642	0.432	0.880	0.657***				**0.801**

Significance of Correlations:
† p < 0.100

* p < 0.050
** p < 0.010
*** p < 0.001

Overall, the model seems to have good validity and reliability based on the CR and AVE values. The low MSV values, which indicate that the latent factors are distinct, and the MaxR(H) values, which demonstrate that the correlations between the factors are within an acceptable range, both support the validity of the CFA model.

All fitness values were within acceptable criteria limits, depending on the test, hence implying a good model fit (table 8). A Chi-square/df value between 2.0 and 5.0 was considered acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2010). In present research, the chi-square/df value was equal to 2.769. The RMSEA value was 0.052. Also, CFI, PClose and SRMR values were 0.954, 0.05 and 0.085 respectively; demonstrating a good model of fit, thus supporting the results and validating the proposed model.

Table 8
Goodness of Fit Statistics

Measure	Estimate	Threshold
CMIN/DF	2.769	$2.0 - 5.0$
CFI	0.954	$0 \sim 1$
SRMR	0.085	<0.08
RMSEA	0.052	$0 - 0.1$
PClose	0.05	>0.05

(Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2010)

Table 9
Hypothesis Testing: (Regression Weights-Default Structure Model)

Hypothesis	Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
H_{01}	OJ	→	IWB	.300	.030	10.030	***	*Sig.*
H_{02}	OJ	→	POS → IWB	.750	.053	14.267	***	*Sig.*
H_{03}	OJ	→	POS →CGO → IWB	1.235	.047	6.397	***	*Sig.*
H_{04}	OJ	* AL	→IWB	.781	.038	20.410	***	*Sig.*

Significance of Correlations:*** p < 0.001
*Moderation

With a regression weight of .300, Table 9 shows a significant and direct relationship between OJ and IWB. P-value has a high level of significance. As a result, the first proposed relationship—OJ with IWB strongly supports Hypothesis H_{01} (OJ with IWB) and show a high degree of statistical significance. The results indicate that there is a significant (p<0.001) indirect effect of OJ on IWB through the mediation of POS, in accordance with the mediation hypothesis H_{02} (OJ → POS → IWB). The results imply that when POS mediated the relationship between OJ and IWB, the regression estimates of the direct relation between OJ and IWB rose from .3 to .75. Given an input variable of OJ and an output variable of IWB, hypothesis H_{03} has two mediators, POS and CGO. Compared to all other path analyses, the regression estimate was 1.235 with high significance. The regression weight for H_{03} (1.235) is much higher than that of H_{01} and $H_{02,}$ which showed the distinct difference of direct and mediation effect at .300 and .75 respectively. Consequently, the serially mediated hypothesis H_{03} (OJ → POS → CGO → IWB) was determined to be the most appropriate structure model for workers. Given its combined emphasis on OJ, CGO, and IWB through POS, the results also suggest that the serial mediation model is the most successful model for the FMCG sector from the view point of workers.

The only moderator that acted as a catalyst between the input variable OJ and the output variable IWB was AL. With a regression estimate of .781, the moderation hypothesis H_{04} (OJ *AL → IWB) has been determined to be significant. With the exception of the serially mediated model, this hypothesis' regression estimate indicates that it is also a befitting model from workers' point of view when compared to all the other direct and mediated models.

The results showed in Table 9, taken together, offer a thorough summary of the ways in which workers' behaviors and perceptions within the organizational context are influenced by OJ, POS, CGO and AL. The results support hypotheses of the study and offer insight into the mechanisms impacting workers' attitudes and actions regarding innovation and organizational support.

Conclusion

This study addresses a significant research gap regarding the relationship between OJ and IWB in Pakistan's FMCG sector by confirming that OJ positively affects employees' IWB. The emphasis on Pakistan's FMCG sector offers a particular contextual perspective that is frequently lacking in previous research. This sector-specific insight has implications for industry leaders in comparable situations. The use of a serial mediation model (OJ → POS → CGO → IWB) is a novel approach in studying the impact of OJ on IWB through the integration of various factors influencing the relationship. Examining the disparities in perspectives of employees is a fresh approach that emphasizes the necessity of customized strategies to promote IWB at various organizational levels. The results of the study on the complex interaction effects, that is, moderating effect of authentic leadership and serial mediation model, open up new research avenues and challenge existing assumptions regarding FMCG industry.

In conclusion, while factors like OJ, IWB, POS, CGO and AL are recognized as important factors by employees in the FMCG sector, the results indicate that the priorities and perceptions of these factors vary depending on the roles and responsibilities of workers within the organization.

Recommendation

Organizations may maximize employee engagement, performance and innovation at all levels by identifying and resolving the difference of perception of workers in the light of the findings of this study. Research data suggest that business leaders and HR professionals should prioritize and improve upon OJ in all its forms—distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational—to create an environment where employees may feel treated fairly. This fairness propensity is imperative to foster IWB in the competitive FMCG sector by ensuring equitable treatment and transparent decision-making processes in the formulation and implementation of HR policies.

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