

THE MODERATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE EFFECT OF INFORMATIONAL JUSTICE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON BANKS OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to understand the effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement. The study comprises of two objectives: first, examining the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement. Second, whether perceived organizational support moderates this relation. The findings contribute to the literature in three ways. As limited work has been conducted on this subject in the banking sector, it enhances the understanding of informational justice in the banking sector. Secondly, moderating role of perceived organizational support in relation to employee engagement, which is apparently less addressed in the literature. Lastly, it penlights the negligible area of performance appraisal justice in the service sector of Pakistan which is getting economic attention as emerging South East Asian country. Using post mail questionnaire, the data was collected from bankers working in district Larkana-Sindh, Pakistan. To test the moderating effect, a Hierarchical regression model is used. The results show that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement. The study concludes that high perceived organizational support will result in higher engagement. The implications and scope for further research are discussed.

Keywords: Banking, Employee Engagement, Informational Justice, Performance Appraisal Justice, Perceived Organizational Support, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal plays a vital role in corporate management. While reviewing literature thoroughly, one can find its substantial position in Human Resource Management (HRM). Simultaneously, it is also

observed that this practice is less entertained by employees, rather sometimes they express disinterest in it. However, the human resource department is always found confident about putting energies and efforts in appraisals but ends with complaining about receiving no benefits in return. In such situation, one must coin the questions, why are they not getting benefits? Moreover, why employees are complaining?

One of the foremost answers to this question is implementing inappropriate appraisal system or unable to understand the contextual performance (Hui & Qin-Xuan, 2009). However, these answers may not fit now, since continuous “appraisal fit” analysis has been carried out in organizations over and then. Hence, it opens to a missing phenomenon which is not yet observed.

It is discovered that the problem faced by human resource department is an absence of work performance by employees. They are not found in accomplishing tasks physically, emotionally and cognitively (i.e., employee engagement). Consequently, a downturn in performance is observed which is raising the concern for human resource department. In contrast, employees are complaining about how and why they have been appraised in a certain way (i.e., informational justice). Neither they are communicated for the ways used to appraise nor been explained why in a specific fashion or method appraisal has been conducted; this gives rise to the core research questions for this study, what is the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement? Moreover, is there any effect of perceived organizational support on informational justice-employee engagement relation?

The service sector was selected to answer these research questions. Since service sector has a direct impact on economic development (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016), one of the fastest growing sector of Pakistan- Banking sector was selected. The intense competition among banks is observed recently in the banking sector of Pakistan. The importance of this sector has emerged from economic pressure and change in monetary policies. Since this sector is proliferating, human resource department must manage the performance of employees to reach ultimate goals of meeting the market competition. As growing banking sector of Pakistan is resulting immense competition among banks, the turnover and lack of commitment are also accelerating among employees (Asrar-ul-Haq, 2015). Therefore, the importance of

engagement at work through fairness in appraisals is getting attention. Since fairness in appraisals constitutes a psychological contract between employee-employer and results in reciprocity (Rousseau, 1995), it is imperative to manage performance appraisal justice to increase work performance and attain organizational objectives.

The study comprises two objectives, first, to examine the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement. Second, whether perceived organizational support moderates this relation. The findings will contribute to the literature in three ways. As a very limited work has been conducted on banking on the subject. First, it will enhance understanding of informational justice in the banking sector. Second, moderating role of perceived organizational support in relation to employee engagement, which is less addressed in the literature. Lastly, it penlights the negligible area of performance appraisal justice in the service sector of Pakistan which is getting economic attention as emerging South East Asian country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Justice

Justice is a concept having an age over 60 years (Rowland & Hall, 2013), but it was first explained by Greenberg (1986), in workplace context and became organizational justice. According to Greenberg (1990), “to test principles of justice in general social interaction, not organizations in particular” is organizational justice. Later, the concept remained in the discussion for years and theorist were successful in differentiating between procedural justice and distributive justice. In organizations fairness pertaining outcomes is distributive justice, and in contrast, fairness sustained to reach outcomes is procedural justice. While studying fairness in outcomes and means to reach outcomes, another aspect got the attention of theorist concerning implementation and communication of decisions which led to propose the third category as interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). He explained it about the quality of interpersonal relationships during the implementation of procedures. The most exceptional contribution was made by Greenberg (1993), he further elaborated on interactional justice into two constructs; informational justice and interpersonal justice. Informational justice is disseminating information regarding the distribution of outcomes in certain custom and usage of particular procedures to decide outcomes. For many years the focal point of researchers was distributive justice by equity theory

(Adams, 1963). It states that the employees compare and measure the ratio between input and output with others, consequently, if equilibrium is not attained then behaviors and attitudes may change. However, literature revealed the claim that informational justice is far more critical than procedural and distributive justice (Scott, Colquitt, & Zapataphelan, 2007). It is also discussed that informational justice exerts a significant impact on employees' behavior and attitude by generating satisfaction (Loi, Yang, & Diefendorff, 2009).

One of the vital system in the organizations is the human resources system, and performance appraisal is a vital part of it. Justice in performance appraisal denotes fairness of career system. It includes all from the establishment of a performance standard to communicate with a supervisor in the end (Gupta & Kumar, 2012). Different types of justice perceptions are possible to study in the context of performance appraisal. Colquitt, et al., (2001), explain distributive justice in performance appraisal is constituted by the fairness of the ratings in comparison to others. Procedural justice in the appraisal is constituted by the policies for distributing outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001). Interpersonal justice in the appraisal is treatment received by employees during appraisal and information provided to employees during appraisal for distribution in a certain way is informational justice (Greenberg, 1993). Substantial communication is required in performance appraisal between supervisor and employees, and they expect to be treated respectfully during this process as it will constitute in interpersonal and informational appraisal justice (Gupta & Kumar, 2012).

Informational justice literature comprises three significant streams. The first stream shows the antecedents of informational justice (Armstrongstassen & Schlosser, 2011; Lang, Bliese, Lang, & Adler, 2011). Second is focused towards outcomes of informational justice (Jones & Martens, 2009; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Hartnell, 2009), and the last is referred to establishing a link between behavior and attitude and informational justice.

Employee Engagement and Perceived Organizational Support

The physical, emotional and cognitive expression of an employee at work performance is engagement (Kahn, 1990). Performance appraisals must carry fairness if organizations want employees to express themselves (Latham, Almost, Mann, & Moore, 2005). It is also discussed in the

literature that level of personal engagement varies in different situations, it varies according to safety, or benefits, or guarantee in situations (Kahn, 1990). The social system in organizations create a non-threatening environment which generates psychological safety; if employees fail to achieve task even than will be treated fair and their efforts will be considered (Kahn, 1990). Additionally, the perception of justice helps to minimize depression, anxiety and psychological distress (Spell & Arnold, 2007). About social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees invest energies at work to get a return on management in a fair manner (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Similarly, based upon their argument of reciprocity greater justice perception will result in more engagement and performance outcome (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008).

Subsequently, the idea given by Khan (1990), engagement has remained one of the frequent discussion in human resource management. Many researchers have taken part in growing interest and discussions of engagement but are left with overlapping and inconsistent definitions (Bhatnagar, 2007, Suan Choo, Mat & Al-Omari, 2013). Moreover, it is challenging to conceptualize employee engagement because it lacks universal definition (Suan Choo, 2013; Gupta & Kumar, 2012).

Employee engagement concept has often overlapped with job involvement, motivation, and commitment (Gupta & Kumar, 2012). However, researchers have distinguished these concepts (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Gupta and Kumar (2012), also argued that these concepts be different from one another as they result in different dimensions. Similarly, Saks (2006), has also differentiated organizational commitment and employee engagement and have categorized these as two different concepts.

Perceived organizational support is an assurance for provision in a stressful situation to perform the job effectively (George et al., 1993). Among the factors highlighted by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), fair treatment and discretionary actions by organizational agents contribute more to perceived organizational support. The discretionary actions taken by leaders are considered as the intent of an organization than personal because leaders are considered organizational agents (Levinson, 2009). Therefore, every information disseminated by the leader will be perceived as of organization, and this generates a sense of care by the organization. According to social exchange theory, voluntary aid is valued by

individuals than forced actions because they depict that organization respects them (Cotterell, Eisenberger, & Speicher, 1992). Additionally, respect and adequate explanations by agents will also raise the level of perceived organizational support, hence, will rise work engagement among employees.

This study concentrates on perceived informational justice. Moreover, the attention is drawn towards information sharing fairness between supervisor and employees. Employees keep long-term focus (i.e., career development) that is why adequate and honest communication will generate perceived fairness for how decisions were made (Bies & Moag, 1986). Consequently, this will reduce uncertainty (Liu & Yu, 2017). Employees work hard when they perceive that rewards are decided relatively and were communicated to us timely. Therefore, it is argued that informational justice will have a positive impact on employee engagement. It is assumed that when employees perceive career development and receive comprehensive information for policies and procedures, their engagement will increase. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to disseminate information entirely and timely (Colquitt et al., 2001), eliminate vagueness and increase performance.

Additionally, the theoretical foundation of the hypothesis is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which proposed that social exchange is based on reciprocity, if employees perform well today they will be rewarded well in future by the organization. Relating this to the organization, it is deduced that in exchange for better future returns, employees depict work engagement today. Therefore, following is proposed:

H1: Informational justice is positively related to employee engagement.

Perceive organizational support is a critical contextual factor, based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), and norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It directs how an employee should behave in a favorable situation. Fairness in performance appraisal and sharing of adequate information is believed to create a productive workforce, it signals a supportive environment and generates the perception that organization would provide sufficient job resources when required (Verburg et al., 2017). Additionally, Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011), have also discussed the positive relationship between perceived organizational

support and engagement. Therefore, informational justice in performance appraisal effect on engagement will be high in the presence of perceived organizational support because fairness fosters supportive environment and employees are likely to be engaged more in work. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Perceived organizational support will stronger the relationship between informational justice and engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is cross-sectional and quantitative data collection method is used. The respondents of the study are banking professionals from 13 randomly selected banks (public and private) of district Larkana, Pakistan. The data was collected through postal mail. Before mailing questionnaires several e-meetings and telephonic conversations were conducted between researcher and branch managers pertaining permission, guidelines, discussing the purpose of research and maintaining confidentiality, anonymity & privacy. Having several successful e-meetings, written permission was taken from managers to conduct research. A list of permanent employees working in respective banks was collected from branch managers and respondents were selected randomly. Later, a postal package was dispatched to each selected employee's working address consisting invitation to participate, the purpose of research, requesting for providing an address to dispatch questionnaire and signed a letter to ensure their privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. In total 275 postal packages were dispatched, and 245 consent letters were received to participate in research. Far ahead, questionnaires were dispatched on stated addresses containing guidelines to fill questionnaires and a letter of thanks as gratitude. Two-week time was given to send a response. A follow-up letter was dispatched to return the questionnaire reminding time of submission. At the end of the given period, a total of 223 questionnaires were received out of which eight questionnaires were not useable because respondents were not gone through the appraisal process. Finally, 215 questionnaires were used for statistical analysis.

Informational justice items were adapted from Colquitt et al. (2001), recently used by Karriker, Williams and Williams (2017); Game and Crawshaw (2017); and Gupta and Kumar (2012). Also, Items for engagement were taken from (Thomas, 2007), recently used by Gupta and Kumar (2012). Perceived organizational support items were adapted from

Eisenberger (1986), recently used by Wang et al. (2017). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree- 5” to “Strongly disagree- 1”.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To conduct quantitative analysis, Regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed as Hair and Jnr (2009) suggest, it allows measuring relationships between or among independent or dependent variable. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the items for the reliability of test scores. It is imperative that all items should measure the same thing. Therefore, correlation must exist among these and Cronbach alpha is suitable to measure the internal consistency of items (Bland & Altman, 1997). To measure the interaction effect, Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) was conducted (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1994). Additionally, HLM was also conducted by Wang et al. (2017), to measure the moderating role of perceived organizational support.

The sample comprises 85.6 % of males, 62.8 % of the respondents fall into the age bracket of 23-34, 65.1 % of the sample hold master’s degree, 63.3 % were married, and 14.4 % of the respondents had more than five-year experience in banking sector. The demographics of the sample indicate that respondents hold adequate knowledge about their position, responsibilities, guidelines, and procedures as they were well educated, experienced and committed professionals in their job.

The descriptive statistics, correlations and Cronbach’s Alpha are given in Table 1. Among variables, informational justice mean value was 4.04, employee engagement as 4.09, and perceived organizational support was found 3.89. However, the standard deviations are 0.611, 0.491 and 0.603 respectively. Cronbach alpha values for the items are ranging between $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$, which refers that internal consistency is ‘good’ (Devellis, 2016), and reliable for further statistical analysis. The correlational analysis indicates that all correlations are statistically positively correlated and are significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach’s Alpha, and Correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3
1. Informational justice	4.04	.611	.812	1		
2. Employee Engagement	4.09	.491	.843	.351**	1	
3. Perceived Organizational Support	3.80	.757	.879	.587**	.599**	1

SD = Standard deviation, α = Cronbach’s Alpha, ** $P < 0.01$

To test the hypotheses, hierarchical multiple regression is conducted. For testing hypothesis 1, regression analysis was carried out. The informational justice accounted for significant amount of variance in employee engagement $R^2 = .123$, $F(1, 213) = 30.002$, $p < .001$ (Model 1). For analyzing the second hypothesis, perceived organizational support was inserted in the previous model and ran a regression; they accounted for the significant amount of variance in employee engagement $R^2 = .256$, $F(2, 212) = 36.39$, $p < .001$ (Model 2). Later, to avoid high multicollinearity with the interaction term, the variables were centered and an interaction term between informational justice and perceived organizational support was created (Aiken et al., 1994). Further, interaction term was added in regression model, accounting significant variation in employee engagement $R^2 = .339$, $F(3, 211) = 35.99$, $p < .001$ (Model 3). Communally, Model 2 and Model 3 explained significant change, $\Delta R^2 = .132$, $\Delta F(1, 212) = 37.63$, $p = .001$ and $\Delta R^2 = .083$, $\Delta F(1, 211) = 26.46$, $p = .001$ respectively. Table 2. shows Model 1, 2, 3 together with a change in statistics individually.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R Square		Change Statistics				
		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig.	F Change
1	.123 ^a	.123	30.002	1	213	.000	
2	.256 ^b	.132	37.630	1	212	.000	
3	.339 ^c	.083	26.460	1	211	.000	

Predictors: (Constant), Informational Justice

Predictors: (Constant), Informational Justice, Perceived organizational support

Predictors: (Constant), Informational Justice, Perceived organizational support, the interaction term

The coefficients of the Models (1, 2, and 3) are given in Table 3. Informational justice in Model 1 has $b = .351$, $t(213) = 5.477$, $p < 0.001$. After adding perceived organizational support, Model 2 has $b = .405$, $t(212) = 6.134$, $p < 0.001$. Similarly, the interaction term in Model 3 has $b = .317$, $t(211) = 5.144$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 3. Coefficients of the Model

Measures	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	4.097*** (130.219)	4.097*** (140.972)	4.050*** (140.186)
Informational Justice	.351** (5.477)	.173* (2.621)	.287*** (4.334)
Perceived Organizational Support		.405*** (6.134)	.439*** (7.003)
Informational Justice x Perceived Organizational Support			.317*** (5.144)
Sample Size	215	215	215

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Additionally, it was found that high perceived organizational support accounts for greater strength in the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement and vice versa (Figure 1).

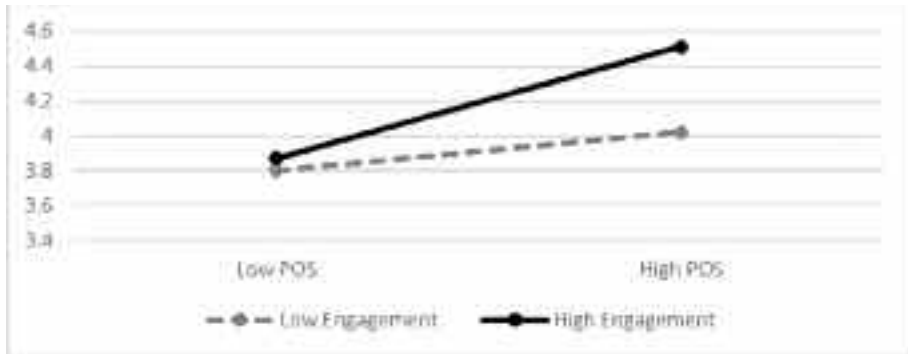


Figure 1. Moderating Variable Versus Interaction

The results of the quantitative analyses support the hypotheses. There is a positive relationship between informational justice and employee engagement (hypothesis 1) and perceived organizational supports to strengthen the relationship between informational justice and employee engagement (hypothesis 2). The analysis also shows that high engagement is accounted for by the greater perceived organizational support.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this fast-growing world, each organization is striving to satisfy markets. One cannot neglect the importance of human resource management. Organizations are of concern to retain their human resource to compete in markets. Economies are mounting, and competitions are getting fierce. Performance is the only tool that can help these organizations sustain competition, and that desired performance can only be attained when employees show dedication at work by not only involving physically but also emotionally and cognitively. This vigor at work will not alone help organizations to meet objectives; it is also needed to be fair in appraising performance. Performance appraisal justice helps in making a psychological contract which employees reciprocate by showing engagement at work and increasing performance. This exchange is explained by Blau (1964), as Social Exchange Theory.

Employees also measure the level of reciprocity by different levels of engagement. The guidelines, policies, and procedures provided by the supervisor to conduct appraisals signal support and decrease ambiguity and anxiety among employees. Similarly, information about carrying

appraisal in a particular way and details about the division of rewards helps increase perceived support from the organization. Since supervisors are considered as agents of the organization, the measure carried by the supervisor is considered as a token of appreciation by the organization. In contrast, organizations not providing sufficient level of information to employees will have to face less dedication from employees, as the employee will not perceive support from the organization.

The results of the analysis show support for the first hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between informational justice and employee engagement which is consistent with previous studies. Therefore, provision of information shall not be neglected by organizations. Managers should provide information regarding policies, procedure, guidelines, the conduct of research, and explain why employees are rewarded in a certain way. This information will help employees to represent dedication at work and will increase performance. Additionally, human resource department shall manage a mechanism to increase communication between manager and employees. Several meetings are recommended while conducting appraisal followed by post appraisal sessions explaining outcomes. Managers shall also realize that by providing information, they are forming a psychological contract with employees which enables them to reciprocate in exerting greater performance.

The empirical analysis also concluded that perceived organizational support has an impact on informational justice - employee engagement. Research findings support second hypothesis, higher the perceived organizational support greater the engagement at work and vice versa. Therefore, human resource department in organizations should ask managers to keep an open and transparent communication with employees. In return, this will generate great fairness and engagement at work.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This study consists some limitations the data was collected from one district (Larkana, Pakistan) only. Also, the study incorporated both public and private banks. Future studies may incorporate perceived organizational support as moderator with other types of performance appraisal justice, and a comparative analysis may be carried out separately for public and private banks. It is also suggested substantiating similar models in other service sectors.

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