

## The Impact of Distributive (In) Justice on Deviance at Workplace in Public Sector Organizations of Pakistan with the Mediation of Perceived Organizational Support

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### Abstract

The current study examined the relationship between distributive justice and workplace deviance with the role of perceived organizational support as mediator. The descriptive (correlation) method of data collection was used. The participants in this study were 150 staffs from public sector organizations of Pakistan. All the three variables were measured with a single designed questionnaire. The data were analyzed by using the correlation and linear regressions. The major findings were as follows: 1) Distributive justice and workplace deviance was found significantly and negatively correlated with each other. 2) Distributive justice was found significantly and positively correlated with perceived organizational support. 3) Workplace deviance was determined significantly and negatively correlated with perceived organizational support, 4). The regression analysis proved the perceived organizational support as a full mediator between distributive justice and workplace deviance.

**Keywords:** Distributive justice; Workplace deviance; Organizational deviance; Interpersonal deviance; Perceived organizational support and public sector of Pakistan

### Introduction

Various studies on organizational justice explained that fairness perception results various emotional, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. This study concern with a behavioral outcome of organizational justice, the deviant workplace behavior as evidenced by many studies, as it is an output of injustice perceived by employees in organizational setting [1]. Employees when perceived injustice in organization feels anger, frustration and resentment in their minds, later on feelings like that convert to actual deviant workplace behavior such as a temptation for revenge and retaliation etc. [2,3]. Workplace deviance is affecting organizational setting very badly; scholars have mentioned such harmful behaviors with different names. Robinson and Greenberg [4] have introduced it as antisocial behaviors. Fox et al. [5] have called it as counterproductive behaviors. Robinson and Bennett [3] have named it as deviant workplace behaviors. Deviant workplace behavior has many types like theft, vandalism, aggression, retaliation, sabotage, abuse, etc. [3]. Researchers have sort out various antecedents that contribute in deviant workplace behavior, organizational justice/injustice is one of these. Many studies have shown that organizational justice/injustice caused to workplace deviance [6-8].

Organizational justice refers to a perception of an individual, whether he/she is treated fairly or unfairly within organization [9]. Adam's [10] equity theory argued that individuals evaluate the extent of fairness in the outcomes allocation, in policies and procedures and also in the interactions they practiced with supervisors and colleagues. This evaluation of fairness/unfairness leads to trust/distrust and social exchange [11]. Consequently, if employee's contributions and efforts contrast with the outcomes allocated by organization may cause perceived inequity. Policies and procedures may be unfair if they are in contrast with the written standards of organization and the legal criteria of justice. Treatment may be unfair if supervisors are not exposing important information to their subordinates and also not providing them opportunities to involve in decision making process. This study is concern with the outcomes allocations (distributive justice). Employee who exposed to above situations struggles to reduce

the frustration caused by inequity, eventually they practiced behaviors which are completely against the organizational norms [2].

Deviant workplace behavior is a discretionary behavior in contrast to significant organizational norms and policies and badly affects the wellbeing of an organization collectively [3]. Deviant workplace behavior have been introduced by scholars quite late in the discipline of organizational behavior, but in case of research many researchers were interested to study it as a research area, as a result it was recognized as a good research area quite rapidly. That is why practitioners and researchers have been developed many topologies and models [3]. A topology developed by Robinson and Bennett [3] has received more attention of scholars. It is very comprehensive and self-explanatory. It has two dimensions. One of these two dimensions is "minor verses serious deviance" while second dimension is "interpersonal verses organizational deviance". Based on these dimensions the stated typology deals with four forms of workplace deviance: production deviance, property deviance, political deviance and personal aggression.

Levison argued that employees considered the actions of the managers/supervisors as actions of the organization itself. This consideration led to a relationship between employee and his/her work organization-social relationship. And the phenomena of social relationship comes out from social exchange perspective [12]. The social exchange theory focused on the norm of reciprocity, it argued that the recipient and donor are interdependent [13]. So employee judges such relationship at workplace and comparing his/her contributions and efforts with treatment of the work organization in back. This judgment may lead to a perception (perceived organizational support)

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either negative or positive. Perceived organizational support generally is an outcome of various forms of perceived favorable treatment such as fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and job conditions [14]. Therefore organizational unjust environment may lead to negative perception and eventually to harmful behavioral outcomes. Consequently injustice perception may compel employees to think that whether their work organization care of their wellbeing and contributions or not. In case of unbalance employees may involve in some harmful organizational behaviors [15,16].

In Pakistan, the public sector is the largest sector of employment in which millions of employees are working but it has remained a target of criticism for years. This sector as large is more important for country development and national economy, but unfortunately it has been exposed with many issues which are main hurdles to go to peak. A number of these issues relate to employee behavior such as absenteeism, sabotage, retaliation and other similar deviant behaviors. In stated sector as compared to private sector employees more involved in such harmful behaviors. Thus it is necessary for the effective management of public sector to know about the causes and consequences of employee's workplace deviance. In this regard organization needs to provide an environment in which their employees exhibit more positive behaviors and also to take benefit in long.

## Literature Review

### Organizational justice

Organizational justice means how an individual perceive matters of fairness within organization [2]. Scholars Greenberg [2] and Bies and Moag [17] have erased out three main dimensions of organizational justice. The first dimension of organizational justice is concern with contents (Distributive justice), second dimension focus on processes (Procedural justice), and third dimension is concern with fair interactions (Interactional justice) of organizational members within organization. Distributive justice deals with the reality whether each individual has "just share" or not. It specifically deals with ends/outcomes allocation. Disturbance creates when a member perceived that he/she is actually treated unfairly in allocations of outcomes [18].

### Distributive justice and deviant workplace behavior

According to Adam's [10] equity theory people make a comparison of their perceived rewards/allocations to their perceived contributions and efforts and same happened in case of their colleagues perceived rewards/allocations and perceived contributions and efforts. If an individual perceive injustice in such comparison, a frustration and resentment developed in his/her mind, which consequently lead to behavioral and psychological reactions [2]. Many studied have revealed that organizational justice/injustice can lead to various positive outcomes like job satisfaction, organization citizenship behavior, organizational commitment etc. as well as negative outcomes like tardiness, poor performance, and Absenteeism etc. [19,20]. One of the negative outcomes is deviant workplace behavior. It is a comprehensive term covered all sorts of negative behaviors. Based on equity theory organizational justice and deviant workplace behavior have a relationship. Therefore, scholars Greenberg [2]; Judge et al. [20] and Adam [10] argued that an unfair or unjust practice in organization decisions and management actions tends to affect employees to show negative behaviors which may badly affect the organization wellbeing as well as of its members.

Distributive justice is content based; means to what extent the outcomes allocated are fair [9]. Employees perceiving injustice in

outcomes allocation tends to make it balance. Thus employees may involve in various forms of deviant behaviors like retaliation studied by Skarlicki and Folger [21], they argued that Distributive justice leads to organization retaliation behavior. They further investigated a negative significant relationship between distributive justice and retaliation organizational behavior. Employees perceiving injustice in outcomes allocation (distributive justice) are more likely to be involved in equity rebalancing [7]. Adam's [10] equity theory asserts that individuals affected with inequity, usually modifying their attitudes and behaviors in order to restore equity. This modification of attitudes and behaviors and restoration of inequity may affect the process of achievement of organizational objectives.

A study [22] has found that perceived injustice in outcomes/rewards allocation results to minimize employee efforts or contributions and compelled them to practice workplace deviance such as workplace aggression. Hershcovis et al. [22] also noticed that Distributive justice results supervisor and organization target aggressions. Debergre pointed out that Distributive justice also as a predictor of workplace theft. He argued that employees who perceived unfair treatment in reward system of organization steal more from organization in contrast of those who perceived it fair. To restore such inequity employee involved in some form of dysfunctional behaviors, these dysfunctional behaviors may be individual directed as well as organization. Greenberg [2] also noticed that unfairness in reward system tend employees to steal from work setting. Employees perceiving inequity in their pay reduction practiced some harmful behavior like theft [2]. Dupre and Barling (1996) found that inequitable treatment being a situational factor may cause of unpleasant thoughts and feelings which may convert to various forms of deviant behaviors like workplace aggression, resentment, and outrage. Employees affected with mistreatment in reward allocation, may involve in retaliation against organization or supervisor for restoration of justice. Demore et al. [23] found that injustice perception predicts high vandalism in college student. The above literature revealed that Distributive justice may cause of deviant workplace behavior. In light of above reviewed literature, the following hypotheses will be studied towards fulfillment of research objectives of the study.

**H1a:** Distributive justice has negative significant relationship with organizational deviance.

**H1b:** Distributive justice has negative significant relationship with interpersonal deviance.

### Perceived organizational support

Social exchange theory is an important perspective which deals with the employee-organization relationship. This approach stemmed out of the study of Gouldner and Blau [13,24]. Gouldner [13] explained the social exchange approach with the norm of reciprocity. Cropanzano and Mitchell [1] assert that an action by one party may cause a response from another party in the near future. The recipient will response according to perceived treatment, in case of fair treatment the response will be positive while unfair treatment will lead to negative response. Thus, while practicing the norm of reciprocity a perception developed in employee's mind regarding organization which may be positive as well as negative. The development of negative perception further converts in to negative job attitudes and behaviors. Social exchange relationship becomes stronger when in reciprocation employers and employees care about of each other's stakes [1]. The negative reciprocation may deteriorate social exchange relationship. This negative reciprocation may cause of frustration and tension in employee's mind, which

further take the form of negative job attitudes and behaviors [25]. As a derivative of social exchange ideology, Organization support theory [16] explained the employee-organization relationship. Eder and Eisenberger [16] developed perceived organizational support as a main construct to understand the exchange process. In perceived organizational support employee perceive that to what extent their work organization care about their wellbeing and value their contributions Eisenberger et al. [16]. If employees are putting their full energy and efforts for success of organization but in response they receive injustice in every angle of organization as a result a strong negative perception have developed in their minds, they feel that their organization is not supporting them. This perception tend them to bring balance between their contributions and what they receive in response, for which they become involve in some harmful organizational behaviors such as stealing from workers, sabotage, vandalism etc. Furthermore, to bringing balance they reduce their inputs by involving some harmful behaviors such as intentionally late to office, absenteeism, and taking long breaks and gossiping with colleagues. It shows that how perceived organization support mediate between the relationship of distributive justice and deviant workplace behavior. In light of above reviewed literature, the following hypotheses will be studied towards fulfillment of research objectives of the study.

**H2a:** Perceived organizational support is mediating between the relationship of distributive justice and organizational deviance.

**H2b:** Perceived organizational support is mediating between the relationship of distributive justice and interpersonal deviance.

## Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework refers to a logical diagrammatic representation of study variables. In this model distributive justice/injustice is independent variable, deviant workplace behavior (organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance) is dependent variable, and perceived organizational acts as mediator. Distributive justice has a negative impact on deviant workplace behavior (organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance). Perceived organizational support plays the role of mediator between these both (Figure 1).

## Methodology

The questionnaire of organizational justice has been taken from Niehoff and Moorman [26], having total twenty items. Questionnaire of perceived organizational support has been taken from Rhoades and Eisenberger [15], consists of eight items. Deviant workplace behavior was measured with a questionnaire adopted from Robinson

and Bennett [3] containing nineteen items. The questionnaire was personally administered in target organization's employees. Almost 200 questionnaires were distributed out of which 150 were received back. The response rate was 75 percent. Public sector employees of Pakistan were the population of the study. Sample of the study were 150 employees. The convenient sampling technique was used for the study. The sample selected was representative of population having characteristics as given in Table 1.

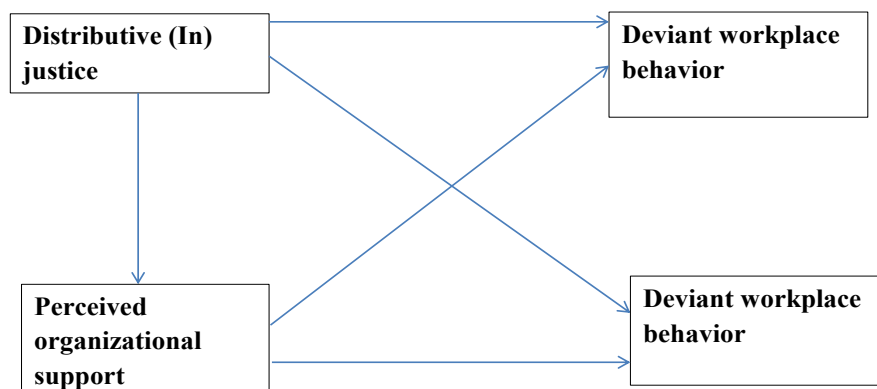
## Findings

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables are illustrated in Table 2. The alpha reliabilities range is 0.71 to 0.90. This range is acceptable and can be consider for further analysis [27]. Perceived organizational support showed significant positive correlation with distributive justice ( $r = 0.457^{**}$ ), and negative correlation with organizational deviance ( $r = -0.548^{**}$ ) and interpersonal deviance ( $r = -0.694$ ). Organizational deviance was negatively and significantly correlated ( $r = -0.342^{**}$ ) with distributive justice. Interpersonal deviance was also negatively and significantly correlated with distributive justice ( $r = -0.342^{**}$ ). The negative and significant correlation between the distributive justice and forms of deviance are worth noticing as they indicate a possible causal relationship may exist between justice and deviance in the reported direction.

To test the mediation Baron and Kenny's [28] approach was used. This approach says about four conditions necessary for mediation. First, the predictor must correlate with dependent variable. Second, the independent variable must also correlate with the mediator. Third, the mediator must have correlation with the dependent variable. Fourth, the independent variable must have correlation with the dependent variable after inclusion of mediator in the regression equation. To claim full mediation, the predictor and the dependent variable should have a non-significant relationship with the inclusion of predictor and mediator in the regression equation. For partial mediation this relationship must remain significant, but to a lesser degree.

## Examination for Distributive Justice

Hypotheses H1a and H1b stated that distributive justice would have a negative relationship with both dimensions of workplace deviance, organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance respectively. H2a and H2b stated that perceived organizational support would play the role of mediator between the relationship distributive justice and both dimensions of workplace deviance. Tables 2 and 3 represent the



**Figure 1:** Logical diagrammatic representation.

Section	No. of employees	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	150	100
Female	-	-
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	42	28
Married	108	72
<b>Qualification</b>		
Middle	9	6
Matriculation	20	21
Intermediate-Bachelor	87	58
Masters	33	25
<b>Age (years)</b>		
<30	49	32
30-50	92	61
50+	9	6

**Table 1:** Representative of population.

	M	SD	DJ	OD	ID	POS
<b>Distributive Justice</b>	2.415	0.71936	1			
<b>Organizational Deviance</b>	4.02001	0.05169	-.342**	1		
<b>Interpersonal deviance</b>	2.3343	1.13115	-.407*	.622**	1	
<b>Perceived organizational support</b>	4.47501	0.52565	.457*	-.548**	-.694**	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

M: Means; SD: Standard deviations; DJ: Distributive justice; OD: Organizational deviance; ID: Interpersonal deviance; POS: Perceived organizational support

**Table 2:** Means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables.

Predictors	POS/ $\beta$	DWBO/ $\beta$	DW/ $\beta$
<b>Analysis 1</b>			
DWBO and DWBI on DJ		- 0.144*	- 0.159*
<b>Analysis 2</b>			
POS ON DJ	0.177*		
<b>Analysis 3</b>			
<b>Step 1</b>			
DWBO and DWBI on POS		- 0.344**	- 0.208**
<b>Step 2</b>			
DWBO & DWBI on DJ		-0.083	-0.079

**Note:** \* $p < 0.05$  level (2-tailed) and \*\* $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed).

**Table 3:** Relationship with both dimensions of workplace deviance.

analyses. It is clear in Tables 2 and 3 that distributive justice significantly and negatively caused of organizational deviance ( $\beta = -0.144$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and interpersonal deviance ( $\beta = -0.159$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, H1a, and H1b were accepted. By controlling the distal predictor, the results revealed that the relationship of distributive justice with organizational deviance ( $\beta = -0.083$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and interpersonal deviance ( $\beta = -0.079$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) remained insignificant. It reveals POS as full mediator between distributive justice and both organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance. Hence, H4a and H4e were also accepted.

## Discussion

The table of correlation analysis indicates a noticeable negative relationship of distributive justice with workplace deviance (Organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance). Existence of perceived injustice in an organization's environment will certainly lead deviant workplace behavior. The environment of public sector organizations of Pakistan is proven to be more exposed to organizational injustice. Usually, treatment in resources allocation, intact procedures,

policies and interaction of supervisors with subordinates is not based on justice. The treatment with injustice have practiced with different manners like favoritism, relation with employees, nepotism, references from high officials, miscommunication and poor procedures and policies. Favoritism is a common disease in public sector organization of Pakistan. Higher officials only appreciate those employees with whom they have some sort of relationships like relative or friend. They ignore the work of competent and efficient employees and reward those employees for a work which they have never done. They have a soft relationship with them and also interact with them friendly while are ignoring other employees. The above all practices leads to the development of frustration and anger in the mind of those who are suffering from it. Consequently the frustration and anger in the minds of employees convert to a practical behavior called deviant workplace behavior. They became involved intentionally in behaviors like gossiping at the time of work, intentionally arriving late at office, stealing from organization, not following supervisor instructions, wasting organizational resources etc. Also policies for rewarding competent employees in public sector organization are very rare and its practice is equal to zero and if someone practiced it, has totally followed injustice. That's why employees not receiving rewards for which they deserve have finally become aggressive and their commitment level also decreases. A negative perception developed in mind of those suffered employees about their organization as well as supervisor. They feel that their organization and supervisor are not supporting them, which further convert to deviant behavior. They intentionally involved in above mentioned behaviors in which they hurt organization as well as its member's wellbeing.

Distributive justice has strong negative relationship with both types of deviant behaviors. The mediated regression analysis indicates that POS fully mediates between distributive justice and organizational deviance. POS also mediates between distributive justice and interpersonal deviance.

## Practical and Theoretical Implications

This study filled the gap in the literature by considering Distributive justice, workplace deviance, and perceived organizational support in one model. The model of the study is also novel in Pakistani context. The attempt of taking perceived organizational support as a mediator between organizational justice and workplace deviance is first one in Pakistani context.

The study will help managers to understand this new concept in the organizational environment. The findings of the study help managers to think that how to know about and deal with Distributive justice issues in order to reduce harmful behaviors in workplace. It provides awareness to managers that injustice in resource allocation creates issues which may further deteriorate over all organizational goals. As said reciprocity norm, when individuals perceived justice based reward system they response positively. They show positive attitudes and behaviors like commitment, loyalty, helping colleagues, and extra role behavior. This Study provides a guideline to policy makers that at the time of developing policies and reward systems they should not ignore the justice term. Public and Private sectors of Pakistan are facing the issues of deviant workplace behavior, this study exposed the reasons of it and at a time says about it remedy.

This study has a few limitations also. First, the education level of selected sample ranged between Intermediate to Bachelor due to which having participants no enough knowledge of variables of the study. Second, the population only contains male employees. Situational



factors can also affect the responses of the employees. Uninterested participant's response might also have biased the data collected in this study known as "common method variance".

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the impact of distributive justice on deviant workplace deviance with the mediation of perceived organizational support. The study concluded that distributive justice significantly and negatively caused to workplace deviance. However, many other variables may act as moderators and mediators in the study model like trust in organization, affective commitment, employee training etc. The relationship of distributive justice may also be studied with various positive outcomes like organization citizenship behavior, employee's commitment, loyalty, and job performance. So, the model of the study may explore further by replacing dependent or mediator variable.

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