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Research Article



Organisational Justice in Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Interest in the topic of fairness or justice has become increasingly visible in the social sciences over the last three decades. This paper attempts to present the historical perspective and development of justice from a philosophic perspective to a psychological one and its advent in to the organization. While organizational justice continues to garner attention within the organizational setting by researchers, this concept of justice and fairness at the school workplace has gone unheeded. This paper, on the basis of literature review, summarizes a series of principles obtained from two sources, namely Greenberg and Lind (2000) and Leventhal et al. (1980) that highlight the well-established tenets of justice. Usage of these principles may assist in fostering trusting relationship with the faculty, which in turn helps promote and sustain high-level of student performance.

Introduction

Organisational Justice refers to the extent to which employees perceive fairness of work place procedures, interaction, flow of information, and distribution of rewards in an organization. It implies that when subordinates perceive that they are treated fairly by the organization, they are likely to feel the need to reciprocate to the organization. Research in organisational justice was mostly conducted in corporate settings, as a result of which generalisations and conclusions were based on the above findings. Though these theories have been developed and tested in organisations they may not necessarily be sufficient to explain perception of organizational justice in an academic environment. This paper explores the possibility of extending the concept of organisational justice from the corporate sector into the educational sector and to suggest principles which could be followed in order achieve a positive perception of organisational justice by teachers leading to positive work behaviour in an educational institution.

An educational institution such as a school is no less of an organization with employees in the teaching and administrative faculty working towards achieving institutional goals under the leadership of the Principal. When teachers have positive attitudes about their interactions with the Principal and about decision-making processes, they are apt to exhibit behaviours that results in greater organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

However, this concept of justice and fairness in the school work place has gone unheeded. The perceptions of the school employees about their principals and the decision-making processes

that determine the distribution of resources and outcomes, if perceived as fair, respectful and equitable by teachers, will affect the manner in which teachers affiliate with colleagues, engage students, communicate with families, and perform their duties.

Just as an organization has goals and requires efficient and competent employees to achieve them so does an educational institution. It is expected that if teachers perceive a fair amount of organisational justice from authorities, they would exhibit organisational citizenship behaviour but on the other hand the perception of injustice will lead to deviant work place behaviour which is detrimental to the institution. Once appointed, the institution must strive to retain efficient teaching staff for growth and fulfilment of the institutional objectives. For this a study on the perception of organizational justice of the teaching staff seems to be essential. The researcher therefore feels the need to adapt the corporate concept of organizational justice to the educational setting. The information obtained from this research would enhance the importance of organisational justice and its impact on employee behaviour. This paper also suggests certain principles which could be implemented to create an environment of trust, equality and equity.

Materials and Methods

The researcher has relied solely on the exhaustive research on organisational justice available; i.e. secondary data. Further the researcher has referenced studies by Hoy, W.K and C. J Tarter. "Organizational Justice In Schools: No Justice Without Trust.", Greenberg, J and E. A Lind., "The pursuit of organizational justice: from conceptualization to implication to application.", Cooper, C.L and E. W Locke. *Industrial And Organizational Psychology*, Greenberg, J. *The Quest for Justice on the Job*, Greenberg, J. "The social Side of Fairness: Interpersonal and Informational Classes of Organisational Justice." And Cropanzano, R. *Justice in the Workplace: Approaching Fairness in Human Resource Management*.

Analysis and Discussion

Till the 20th century organizational justice was never regarded as an area of interest. A discourse on justice would till then simply reflect it to be a private and personal virtue being thought of as giving each one her or his due, whatever that is, no less and no more (Audard, Catherine, 2017). It was John Rawls in 1971, who adapted the Aristotelian definition of justice from being a personal virtue of "a steady and effective desire to act justly" to being "a virtue of social institutions". Rawls postulated that justice implies a measure of reciprocity and the application of consistent rules thus leading one to perceive justice as a social conception of what persons are duly entitled to and their legitimate expectations, as derived from social rules and institutions. (Rawls 1971) Therefore he affirmed that justice is the a primary virtue of social organization, a norm that enables assessing how societies fare, exactly in the way truth is the criterion that assesses the validity of judgments, discourses, arguments, theories, etc. (Audard, Catherine 2014).

It was Greenberg who first coined the term organizational justice, as "a concept that expresses an employee's perception about the extent to which they are treated fairly in the organization" (1996). Coetzee (2004) went on to state, "organizational justice is a description and explanation of fairness at the workplace". Therefore to sum it all, the concept of organizational justice was considered being related to the employees' perception of the decisions and practices of organizational management and their perception of fairness for the same. Before 1975, Organizational Justice was confined to Distributive Justice, i.e. researchers focused on the justice of decision outcomes (Leventhal 1976). Much of the research on distributive justice was derived from the Equity Theory propounded by Adams (1965), which asserts that employees compare their inputs and outcomes with the inputs and outcomes of relevant others. On these lines it can be said that Distributive Justice emerged to be a form of organizational justice that focused on people's belief that they had received fair amount of valued - work related outcomes. (Giap *et al.*, 2005). Adams theory incited much criticism and therefore after ten years Thibaut and Walker (1975) discovered a new dimension of organizational justice, namely procedural justice that focused on the processes that led to decision outcomes. This led

to the development of a two-factor model of organizational justice. Leventhal (1980) substantiated that procedural justice prevails only when employees feel that the process includes aspects of ethicality, consistency, precision and indiscrimination. Folger and Konovsky (1989) identified a major difference regarding justice in organizations. They stated that when an employee perceives fairness in the amount of compensation received, it is referred to as distributive justice, but when an employee perceives fairness in the means used to determine these amounts it is referred to as procedural justice. The clarity of the two-factor model of organizational justice was clouded with the introduction of interactional justice. This construct was first proposed by Bies and Moag (1986) which focused on employees' perceptions of the interpersonal behaviour exercised during the representation of decisions and procedures, thereby emphasizing the quality of their interpersonal relationship within the organization instead of the structural value of the decision making process. To complicate matters even further, Greenberg (1993) presented a four-factor model of organizational justice namely informational justice, which reflects the amount of information given about the procedures. In an effort to study the disagreement between the number of factors within organizational justice, Colquitt (2001) conducted a factor analysis, which endorsed the four-factor model of organizational justice. Researchers from social sciences have been giving significant attention to the justice construct, studying their antecedents and consequences. The perceptions of individual workers are critical to achieving an organization's intended goals and objectives. Justice has a functional impact on an employees' work outcomes. Following are resultant work attitudes proven by researchers after studying the impact of organizational justice.

- **Reduced employee turnover:** Procedural justice was strongly related to organizational commitment which in turn mediated the relationship between distributive justice and turnover intentions.
- **High organizational commitment and motivation:** Procedural justice has shown to play the largest role in predicting the organizational variables, it being the strongest individual predictor of organizational commitment, motivation and performance.
- **High job satisfaction:** Job satisfaction is directly related to perception of distributive justice indicating that the satisfaction that one has with his/her work is directly related to the manner in which the resources are distributed as compared to procedures or inter personal aspects of the work environment.
- **Organizational efficacy:** Studies have shown that when perception of organizational justice is high, employees perceive the ability to achieve the desired outcome by evaluating different sources of information about their own competencies at the task. Research conducted has found that when procedural justice is high the employees exhibit a higher self-efficacy and a higher willingness to take risks. Further it was found that distributive justice had a negative direct effect on work exhaustion.
- **Job involvement:** Studies indicate that procedural justice is a powerful predictor of employees' job involvement. However some studies have found that distributive justice was found to have a positive indirect effect on job involvement through empowerment.

On the other hand research in organizations where employees do not perceive fairness within their work situations, exhibit counter-productive workplace behaviour. Following are the behaviours as investigated by Robinson and Bennett "The typology of Deviant Workplace Behaviour: A multi-dimensional Scaling study"

- Arriving to work late,
- Leaving work early
- Spreading rumours,
- Blaming others,
- Lower performance
- High turnover intentions

- Decreased organizational commitment
- Theft
- Decreased citizenship behaviour.

Recommendations: Shifting base from the corporate to the academic it is important to note that perception of justice is a variable inherent in every human behaviour. Teachers therefore are no exceptions though they have been a neglected lot given the fact that they function on pre governed terms and conditions subjected to the affiliated boards. In schools, studies on justice suggest a strong correlation to trust. It was found that trust is essential, if schools have to prosper and succeed. It can be concluded that justice and trust in schools are inextricably linked, operating in tandem to shape and influence the social milieu of a given school.

To bolster levels of organizational justice in schools following are some adaptations of principal behaviours by Hoy and Tarter (2004) derived from two sources: Greenberg and Lind (2000) and Leventhal *et al.* (1980). These can be incorporated to bring about a means to perception of fairness and trust within the educational settings.

- **The equity principle:** According to this principle what an individual receives from the organization should be equitable to their contributions. In general, teachers expect that compensation, recognition etc. that will be distributed, should be proportionate to their work, skill, and responsibility. Equity requires fidelity to fairness that balances equity and equality.
- **The perception principle:** This principle states that an individual's perception of fairness contributes to the general sense of justice. Reality does not matter, but a teacher's perception of fairness is a key to satisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers perceive that their principal is being fair in following the rules that is, following the procedures that everyone has tacitly accepted.
- **The voice principle:** This states that the perception of fairness is enhanced when teachers are allowed to participate in decision-making especially, when they have a personal stake in the outcome or when they have the expertise to contribute to the decisions. (Hoy and Tarter, 2003). Authorities need to cultivate both informal and formal mechanisms to bring forth a teacher voice. A cup of coffee with teachers in the faculty lounge or simply "walking around" provides opportunities for informal voice. Formal voice occurs at faculty meetings, department meetings, in written communication, and in an authentic "opendoor" policy.
- **The interpersonal justice principle:** Sound interpersonal skills provide sensitive, dignified, and respectful treatment to the other. Such interaction results in the judgment of fairness. When sound inter personal skills prevail amongst collegial interactions it creates a sense of trust; consequently, trust in turn promotes a strong sense of organizational justice.
- **The consistency principle:** Consistent behaviour is that action which is appropriate to the situation. Therefore, some situations call for direct action while other a more lassie-faire. Effective leadership is matching appropriate leader behaviour with the characteristics of the situation (Yukl, 1998). The leader should not follow rules blindly; rather he/she should be consistent in the application of rules and regulation but at the same time take into account individual needs and extraordinary situations. Such behaviour would instill a sense of confidence in the teachers of knowing how the Principal will react in a variety of situations i.e. predictable and just.
- **The egalitarian principle:** Decision-making should be in the best interest of the organization. Treating everyone equally is not equal. Individuals have different needs and talents; thus, rigidly treating everyone the same is not equal. The decisions should be characterized by the belief in the equality of all people. For example, the practice of assigning newly appointed teachers to the more difficult classes seems to violate the egalitarian principle. Such practices are not in the best interest of the school or teachers.

- **The correction principle:** This principle states that faulty or poor decisions should be corrected. Such behaviour on part of the principal results in the development of trust in the fairness of the principal. Essential for this principle to be effective is two-way communication.
- **The accuracy principle:** Any decision made should be based on accurate information and on sound evidence rather than unverified, unofficial information acquired from another and not part of one's direct knowledge. For e.g. A Principal's decision on the appraisal of a teacher should be based on various quantifiable criteria i.e. feedback from stakeholders, student's performance etc. rather than hearsay subjective analysis. This reinforces the teachers' belief that the Principal is searching for the truth and is open to new information.
- **The representative principle:** States that decisions must represent the interests of concerned parties. The concerned party too, should be involved in the decision making process as they have the knowledge and thereby contribute to a good decision. For e.g. if the Principal intends to upgrade the I. T. facilities, the concerned teacher with the specialization in the said subject should be made a member of the committee appointed to take the decision.
- **The ethical principle:** Ethical behaviour refers to standard principles that encourage the greater value of trust, fairness and benevolence. Behavior in decision-making should be guided by honesty, integrity, and impartiality, ethical and moral standards. Though, it is the last principle it encompasses the above-mentioned principles in totality. The Principal, to instill a sense of fairness amongst faculty cannot be equitable, sensitive, respectful, consistent, free of self-interest, honest until he adheres to the ethical behaviour standards both in letter and in spirit.

To sum up, a sense of justice in the school workplace is dependent on leader behaviour that is consistent with these ten principles. The teachers' perception of fairness with respect to interaction with the school administrators, decision-making process, and decision outcomes can contribute greatly to understanding effective schools.

Implications and Conclusion: Universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was a cherished dream of the new government of the Republic of India. With the skills, talent and attitudes they possess or lack, teachers are one of the primary, perhaps the most important, building blocks of an educational system. They play a vital role in educating and teaching the future generations. Whether we accept it or not, they are perceived as the architects of the second creation. It is a fact that a strong and committed academic staff is essential to serving the nations' outstanding students. To conclude, the school climate is critical at fostering trusting relationships with the faculty and such trust is pivotal in nurturing a sense of organizational justice, which in turn helps in promoting and sustaining high-levels of student performance.

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