



The Impact of Perceived Organizational Justice on Organizational Commitment with the Mediating Role of Positive Organizational Behavior in the Context of Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Introduction and Objective: Organizations seeking greater effectiveness and goal achievement must pay attention to their human capital and foster a sense of fairness among employees. Recognizing employees' values and needs plays a key role in enhancing organizational commitment and overall performance. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment, with the mediating role of positive organizational behavior among elementary school principals.

Methodology: This research was applied in purpose and descriptive–correlational in design. The statistical population included all elementary school principals in Zahedan city, from whom 112 individuals were selected through proportional stratified and convenience sampling methods. Data were collected using three questionnaires: Organizational Justice, Organizational Commitment, and Positive Organizational Behavior. Content validity was confirmed, and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were obtained as 0.66, 0.61, and 0.75, respectively. Data analysis was conducted using stepwise regression and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Results: The findings indicated that organizational justice has a positive and significant effect on the organizational commitment of elementary school principals at a 66% confidence level ($P < 0.01$). Furthermore, positive organizational behavior was found to play a mediating role between organizational justice and organizational commitment at a 65% confidence level ($P < 0.05$). Stepwise regression analysis showed that among the components of organizational justice, interactional justice was able to predict organizational commitment, and among the components of positive organizational behavior, self-efficacy was able to predict the organizational.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that promoting organizational justice, particularly interactional justice, can enhance principals' commitment and improve the overall working climate in elementary schools. Therefore, implementing policies and regulations consistent with organizational justice principles can serve as an effective strategy for improving the efficiency of the educational system.

Keywords

Organizational justice, Organizational commitment, Positive organizational behavior, Elementary school principals

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Introduction

Organizations striving for greater efficiency and effectiveness must recognize that human resources are their most valuable assets. Valuing employees' needs and contributions is a critical step toward achieving organizational goals (Cho & Lewis, 2012). In modern management theories, the human factor is considered the most sensitive and essential element, as organizational success largely depends on the knowledge, skills, and values of its members (Mousavi & Allahyari, 2013). Among various institutions, the education system holds a pivotal role in societal progress, where motivated and committed teachers are fundamental to the effectiveness of the teaching–learning process (Hajlou, Sobhi & Amel, 2015). Justice, as a basic human need, has always been a central theme in social life. In organizational contexts, justice refers to employees' perceptions of fairness in decision-making, reward distribution, and interpersonal treatment (Bohlouli, Alavi & Derakhshan, 2010). Organizational justice is thus regarded as a key element of institutional health and employee satisfaction (Seyedin et al., 2014).

At the same time, the growing emphasis on human relations in management has highlighted the importance of organizational commitment, defined as an individual's emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in an organization (Khanifar et al., 2009; Pedramnia, 2012). High levels of commitment are associated with stronger loyalty, greater performance, and reduced turnover. Given today's rapid organizational changes, managers increasingly seek strategies to strengthen employee commitment and gain competitive advantage (Ansari, Bagheri & Salehi, 2010). Furthermore, recent developments in organizational psychology suggest that traditional research has overemphasized negative constructs such as dissatisfaction and absenteeism, while positive concepts—such as compassion, optimism, and psychological well-being—have been relatively neglected (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). This shift toward positive organizational behavior underscores the need to explore how justice and commitment interact within a constructive and motivational framework.

positive Organizational Behavior (POB) represents a modern approach that has emerged to manage and control negative work factors while enhancing organizational productivity. This perspective emphasizes adopting positive strategies for the development and management of human resources within workplace settings (Fayyzi, Simar-asl & Kaveh, 2010). In today's complex world, where nations pursue sustainable development, such progress can only be achieved through the advancement of human resources. Sustainable societies depend on committed individuals who preserve and promote collective values. However, identifying who is genuinely committed and determining the criteria for such commitment remain subjects requiring extensive research (Allahdadi, 2010). Organizations, as one of the most prominent features of modern societies, are rapidly evolving, and the role of human resources in these transformations is undeniable.

If human resources are considered one of the most vital pillars of an organization, it becomes evident that studying variables related to them carries double importance (Hosseini & Karimi, 2012). One of the major challenges organizations face involves high employee turnover, low motivation, reduced job involvement, poor organizational pride, and eventual resignation. These problems impose significant costs, including decreased productivity, increased expenses related to training, empowerment, recruitment, and the loss of organizational knowledge (Ansari, Bagheri & Salehi, 2010).

Conversely, loyal and satisfied employees who align with organizational values and goals—and who are willing to go beyond their prescribed duties—serve as key contributors to organizational effectiveness. The presence of such employees is associated with higher performance levels, reduced absenteeism and turnover, and an enhanced public image for the organization, ultimately fostering growth and development (Hosseiniyan, Majidi & Habibi, 2007).

Education systems, as governmental institutions, also rely on committed and responsible teachers and staff to effectively implement developmental programs and achieve progress (Zeki, 2001). The educational organization depends on teachers' cooperation and commitment, as commitment reflects the harmony between organizational needs and intrinsic values (Meskini Sartipabadi, 2009). Among the various attitudes toward human resources, organizational commitment stands out as one of the most significant constructs. Within the educational context, organizational commitment is a key dimension of organizational behavior that promotes productivity and effectiveness in schools (Zeki, 2008). Senior managers must possess adequate knowledge to adopt strategies that maintain employee commitment at desirable levels.

Organizational commitment is typically described through three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. *Affective commitment* refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. *Continuance commitment* relates to the awareness of costs associated with leaving the organization, while *normative commitment* reflects a sense of obligation to remain within it. According to Allen and Meyer's model, the common thread among these three dimensions is the bond between the individual and the organization, which ultimately reduces turnover (Goudarzvand Chegini & Aminrouposhty, 2012).

As an attitude, organizational commitment provides managers with valuable insights for planning, organizing, improving efficiency, and reducing absenteeism and delay. A lack of commitment and belonging among organizational members necessitates costly and complex control mechanisms to ensure compliance. Therefore, identifying factors that influence commitment and implementing strategies to enhance it can lead to higher satisfaction, greater efficiency, and improved organizational performance (Hasheminasab, 2010). In fact, numerous studies have confirmed the positive impact of organizational commitment on organizational performance, considering it a key indicator of person–organization fit (Feizi Dolatabadi, 2012). Developing commitment among employees is a critical responsibility of organizational leaders. More committed individuals tend to adhere to organizational goals and values, engage actively in their roles, and are less likely to leave their positions in search of new opportunities (Bagheri & Tavallaee, 2010). Hence, managers—particularly in the education sector—must implement deliberate strategies to foster employee commitment as a central component of organizational development and sustainability.

Organizational justice has long been recognized as one of the essential factors influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors within organizations. Ensuring fairness in procedures, interactions, and outcomes contributes to greater job satisfaction, trust, and commitment among employees. Therefore, it is crucial for organizational leaders and school administrators to continuously strive to enhance the level of justice within their institutions.

In a study by Hadadnia, Shahidi, and Hashemi (2013), the relationship between organizational justice, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior was examined among educational administrators at Islamic Azad University, Region One. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of organizational justice and both organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Specifically, the dimensions of altruism, respect, conscientiousness, virtue, and sportsmanship as components of organizational citizenship behavior were positively associated with organizational justice. Moreover, the affective, normative, and continuance dimensions of organizational commitment showed positive correlations with all dimensions of organizational justice.

Similarly, Amirkafi and Hesheminasab (2012) investigated the impact of organizational justice, perceived organizational support, and organizational trust on organizational commitment. Their findings revealed that organizational justice affects commitment indirectly through perceived organizational support and organizational trust. Moreover, perceived organizational support had both

direct and indirect effects on organizational commitment, while organizational trust exerted the strongest direct influence on commitment among the examined variables.

In another study, Dehghaniyan, Sabour, and Hojati (2011) explored the relationship between organizational justice components and organizational commitment in an insurance company. They found significant positive correlations between distributive and interactional justice and all three components of organizational commitment, as well as between procedural justice and the affective and normative dimensions of commitment.

Furthermore, Park and Yoon (2009) demonstrated that all three dimensions of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—had substantial effects on both organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior among employees. This finding underscores the importance of fairness in organizational procedures and interpersonal relations as a predictor of employee engagement and loyalty. More recently, Pan, Chen, Hao, and Bi (2018) examined the effect of organizational justice on positive organizational behavior and found a significant positive relationship between the two variables. Their study revealed that organizational justice serves as a strong predictor of employees' positive behaviors within the organization, with procedural justice exerting a stronger influence than distributive justice.

Overall, the reviewed studies consistently highlight the central role of organizational justice in shaping organizational commitment and positive organizational behaviors. Enhancing fairness in decision-making processes, interpersonal interactions, and reward distribution can lead to greater employee motivation, satisfaction, and sustained organizational effectiveness.

Path analysis indicated that the direct effect of organizational justice on positive organizational behavior was weaker than its indirect effect. Therefore, it can be inferred that several mediating influences may exist between these two variables. Considering the aforementioned discussions, the Ministry of Education, as the primary institution responsible for training human resources to meet the growing needs of society, plays a crucial role in national development. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment, with the mediating role of positive organizational behavior among elementary school principals. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to enhancing organizational justice and commitment, as well as to promoting positive behaviors within educational organizations. In fact, previous studies have primarily focused on the direct relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment, whereas the inclusion of positive organizational behavior as a mediating variable distinguishes the present research from prior works.

Methodology

Given that the present study aims to investigate the impact of organizational justice on organizational commitment with the mediating role of positive organizational behavior among elementary school principals, the research is applied in purpose and quantitative-correlational in method.

The statistical population consisted of all elementary school principals in Zahedan during the academic year 1402–1403 (2023–2024), totaling 132 principals (35 men and 26 women). Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table and considering the population size, a sample of 112 principals (58 male and 38 female) was selected. The sampling procedure combined proportional stratified sampling and convenience sampling methods.

Data were collected using three standardized questionnaires:

1. Organizational Justice Questionnaire developed by *Niehoff and Moorman (1993)*,
2. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by *Allen and Meyer (1991)*, and
3. Positive Organizational Behavior Questionnaire by *Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007)*.

The Organizational Justice Questionnaire consists of 20 items assessing overall justice and its three dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Responses were rated on a five-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The content validity of the instrument has been previously confirmed. *Naami and Shekarkan (2007)* reported the construct validity and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the total scale and its subscales as follows: overall justice (.82 and .85), distributive justice (.83 and .72), procedural justice (.53 and .88), and interactional justice (.80 and .72). In the present study, reliability was reassessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 – Reliability of Organizational Justice Using Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Distributive Justice	5	0.31
Procedural Justice	3	0.26
Interactional Justice	6	0.68
Overall Organizational Justice	80	0.66

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire includes 18 items measuring three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. It also employs a five-point Likert scale (from *strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5). The content and face validity of the questionnaire were previously established. In a study conducted by *Ahmadipour (2013)* in Iran, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales were reported as .83 for affective commitment, .86 for continuance commitment, and .81 for normative commitment—indicating acceptable psychometric properties (Saatchi, Kamkari, & Askariyan, 2010). In the current study, the reliability of this questionnaire was also evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability of Organizational Commitment Using Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Affective Commitment	2	0.36
Continuance Commitment	2	0.35
Normative Commitment	2	0.36
Overall Organizational Commitment	82	0.25

The Positive Organizational Behavior Questionnaire consists of 80 items and is designed to measure positive organizational behavior and its dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. The response scale is a five-point Likert type, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The content validity of this instrument has been previously confirmed. In a study conducted by *Sarmad, Hejazi, and Bazarghan (2011)*, the Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was reported as 0.60. In the present study, the reliability of the organizational commitment questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability of Positive Organizational Behavior Using Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-efficacy	5	0.38
Hope	5	0.32
Resilience	5	0.26
Optimism	5	0.30
Overall Positive Organizational Behavior	80	0.61

The research data were analyzed using SPSS version 22 and LISREL version 8.80. In addition to descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation), inferential statistics including Spearman correlation, stepwise regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed.

Results

Before addressing the main research questions and determining the appropriate statistical analyses (parametric or non-parametric), it is essential to first examine the normality of the constructs and their dimensions. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K-S) test was employed. Based on the

results of this test, it was determined that the data for all variables did not follow a normal distribution. Consequently, non-parametric tests were used to analyze the non-normal data. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the type and strength of relationships between quantitative variables. In the present study, Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied. Table 5 presents the Spearman correlation matrix of the research variables. The diagonal elements in the matrix indicate the correlation of each variable with itself. As shown in the table, there is a positive and significant correlation between organizational commitment and organizational justice ($N = 112$, $r_s = 0.663$, $p < 0.01$). There is also a positive and significant correlation between positive organizational behavior and organizational justice ($N = 112$, $r_s = 0.166$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, positive organizational behavior is positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment at a 95% confidence level ($N = 112$, $r_s = 0.216$, $p < 0.01$).

Research Question 1: Does organizational justice have a positive effect on the organizational commitment of elementary school principals? To answer this question and evaluate the proposed model, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized, implemented using LISREL version 8. To test the fit of the proposed model with the data, a combination of fit indices was applied, including: normed chi-square (χ^2/df), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

Figures in the output display the proposed research model in two forms: standardized estimates and significant values.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that organizational justice (T-Value = 6.02; $\beta = 0.86$) has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment at a 95% confidence level. The path coefficient of positive organizational behavior on organizational commitment is 0.28, which is positive, and the t-test confirmed that this value is statistically significant (T-Value = 2.83). Furthermore, organizational justice (T-Value = 8.16; $\beta = 0.86$) has a positive and significant effect on positive organizational behavior at a 95% confidence level. According to the results shown in the table, 68% of the variance in organizational commitment and 5% of the variance in positive organizational behavior are explained by the research model. The fit of the proposed model with the data is presented based on various fit indices.

Model Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Status
Chi-square (χ^2)	< 0.05	56.33	Good
Degrees of Freedom (df)	—	68	—
Significance Level of χ^2	< 0.05	0.00653	Good
χ^2 / df	< 3	1.33	Good
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	> 0.90	0.61	Acceptable
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90	0.63	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.90	0.63	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.66	Acceptable
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.033	Good

As shown, the proposed model demonstrates relatively good fit, and the overall structure of the tested relationships is supported by the obtained data. Except for the chi-square index, which is sensitive to sample size and often considered a poor fit indicator, other indices indicate an adequate model fit. Research Question 2: Does organizational justice have a positive effect on the organizational commitment of elementary school principals through positive organizational behavior? Based on the standardized model (Figure), organizational justice exerts an indirect effect on organizational commitment of school principals through the mediating role of positive organizational behavior. With the confirmation of the mediating role of positive organizational behavior, organizational justice has a

significant positive indirect effect on the organizational commitment of elementary school principals ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 1.63$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate a positive and significant effect of organizational justice on organizational commitment. These results are consistent with previous studies demonstrating a positive relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment (Ghasemiyani, Pourreza & Froutan, 2014; Hadadnia, Shahidi & Hashemi, 2013; Amirkafi & Hesheminasab, 2012; Dehghaniyan, Sabour & Hojati, 2011; Chen et al., 2015; Park & Yoon, 2009).

This relationship can be explained by the fact that employees react to the presence or absence of organizational justice. When employees perceive injustice within their organization, they tend to lose attachment and commitment to it. Conversely, when employees feel that they are treated fairly, their commitment to organizational goals increases. When employees perceive fairness in terms of distributive justice (fair allocation of rewards), procedural justice (opportunity to participate in evaluation processes), and interactional justice (fair treatment by managers), their attitudes and behaviors align with organizational objectives. This alignment enhances intrinsic motivation, loyalty, and commitment to the organization and its values.

The findings also revealed that positive organizational behavior mediates the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment. This result aligns with previous research highlighting the positive effects of organizational justice and organizational commitment through positive organizational behavior (Keyvanara, Shahpouri Arani & Oreyzi, 2014; Pourkeyani & Gholami, 2013; Najari et al., 2013; Shah Heidari pour & Kamaliyan, 2012; Akhtar, Ghayas & Adil, 2012; Avey, Reichard, Luthans & Mhatre, 2011; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Positive organizational behavior contributes to organizational effectiveness and employee job satisfaction. Employees with high levels of psychological resources demonstrate optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and goal-oriented behaviors, which positively influence organizational outcomes.

When employees perceive fair treatment by managers regarding resource distribution and rewards (distributive justice), perceive decision-making processes as fair (procedural justice), and feel respected in interpersonal interactions (interactional justice), their positive organizational behavior increases. Consequently, their self-confidence, sense of meaningful contribution, and organizational commitment are enhanced, which motivates them to pursue organizational goals. Among the components of organizational justice, only interactional justice significantly predicted organizational commitment. This finding aligns with Dehghaniyan, Sabour & Hojati (2011). Interactional justice, conceptually distinct from distributive and procedural justice, focuses on the quality of interpersonal treatment. Employees are sensitive to both the interpersonal behavior of supervisors and the structural aspects of decision-making processes (Rezaeiyan, 2003). Positive perceptions of managerial behavior in interpersonal interactions lead to positive organizational performance, highlighting the importance of interactional justice in predicting organizational commitment. Similarly, among the components of positive organizational behavior, only self-efficacy significantly predicted organizational commitment. This result is consistent with Akhtar, Ghayas & Adil (2012). Individuals with higher self-efficacy and confidence tend to exhibit greater organizational commitment. Therefore, investing in employees' positive organizational behavior, particularly in enhancing self-efficacy, is crucial for increasing organizational commitment.

This study has certain limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may introduce subjectivity, which is a common limitation in this type of research. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data collection limits the ability to establish causal relationships.

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