

# GENDER AS A CORRELATE OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE PERCEPTION-AN EMPIRICAL STUDY AMONG INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

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## **Abstract**

*This research work has explored perceptual differences between men and women towards the three dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional justice) and also the relative importance given by men and women towards the dimensions of justice. With categorization of gender as male and female and stereotypical behavior patterns and roles attached to each category, the categorical differences in gender with its associated qualities lends for perceptual differences. The sample taken up for the study are professionals employed in the Information Technology industry in Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu state. The sample size is 173. Data was analyzed by Correlation and Pair wise comparison in Anova using SPSS 23. The results have confirmed gender as a correlate for justice perception and female employees were found to hold high importance for all the three dimensions of organizational justice in comparison with their male counterparts.*

## **Keywords:**

*Distributive Justice, Gender, Interactional Justice, Organizational Justice, Procedural Justice*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Organizational Justice has been proven as a significant factor for its value in promoting job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, performance and reducing employee turnover. As employee behavior and organizational outcomes are shaped by organizational justice, it is important to identify the factors that influence the employee perception of justice within the organization. No two individuals are same and so do their perception they hold towards happenings and events. Three factors have been identified to influence the justice perception of employee – the outcomes (rewards) an employee receives from the organization, organizational procedures and perceiver characteristics by Charash and Spector [4]. This research work has specifically taken up for investigation one of the perceiver characteristic, “gender” and analyzed the gender differences in the justice perception towards the dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional justice). With distributive justice focusing on fairness in reward allocation, procedural justice focusing on the fairness in the process employed in determining the rewards and interactional justice focusing on the fairness in the communication process involved in the implementation and distribution of rewards, it is held that the perception and relative importance an employee places on three dimensions of justice differ. One of the factors that accounts for the difference is their gender. Gender as social construct is categorized as male and female with specific traits/ behaviors attributed to each category. Male are connected with aggressive, assertive and ambitious qualities and female with caring, nurturing and passive qualities. Identification of individuals with the particular gender category makes them to imbibe and display behaviors ascribed to the category. Internalization of traits

associated with the specific category (male/ female) shapes their perception, leading to differences in their thought process. Possession of certain qualities in individuals influences their perception and the relative importance they attach to materialistic and non-materialistic aspects. This lends credence to this research work to explore the perceptual differences between men and women towards the dimensions of organizational justice.

## **1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

When the concept of justice in organization was taken up for research in 1960’s, the job market was dominated by men. Hence there was no requirement to investigate the importance that men and women placed on the dimensions of organizational justice. With changes in the socio- cultural fabric leading to the entry of more and more women in the workforce, it gains currency to investigate the gender differences in justice perception towards the dimensions of organizational justice for better management of the work force and organization.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To investigate the gender differences in justice perception towards the three dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, procedural and interactional justice).
- To investigate the relative importance men and women place on the three dimensions of organizational justice.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE**

Organizational justice as a concept in its initial period was one-dimensional with its emphasis and focus on the fairness in reward distribution. The initial period narrowly confined justice (fairness) only to outcomes and did not have concern for the procedures and process associated with the determination of outcomes and also with the fairness in the communication system. What started as one-dimensional study became multi-dimensional in the later years with organizational justice involving three dimensions – distributive, procedural and interactional.

Greenberg [5] in the year 1987 was the first to coin the term organizational justice, which is defined as the employee perception of fairness in the organization. It is the fairness perception that an employee has towards the distributive, procedural and interactional dimensions within the workplace. The notion that organizational justice is a collective of the three dimensions was established by Greenberg. In its early period of research, justice was limited to the “distributive” aspect with its emphasis on fairness in the distribution of organizational rewards. This period coincides with the equity theory of Adam which advocated for the maintenance of balance in the relationship

between employee effort (input) and the benefit (outcome) received from the organization. The mainstay of distributive justice was fairness in reward allocation. Distributive justice deals with the fairness in the distribution of organizational rewards/outcomes. Research works in the 1970's revealed that distributive justice alone did not offer sufficient ground for explaining employee perception and reaction towards fairness/ unfairness. With its focus narrowed to fairness in reward distribution, distributive justice did not take in to account the procedures involved in the decisions connected with reward distribution. The lacuna was overcome with the identification of the importance of procedural fairness in the justice system by Thibaut, Friedland and Walker in the judicial sphere and the requirement for the same in organizations was proven in the work of Leventhal. Procedural justice deals with the fairness in the organizational procedures that deals with the decisions connected with the distribution of rewards. Procedural justice is judged on the degree of accuracy and unbiased nature involved in the organizational processes and decisions. Later research works on organizational justice involved study of both the distributive and procedural aspect. The third dimension, "interactional justice" was introduced by Bies & Moag in 1986. Interactional justice is concerned with the fairness in the communication process involved in the implementation of procedures and distribution of rewards. Interactional justice is about the dignity and politeness in the communication process that takes place between the superior and subordinates. The human element is the cornerstone of the interactional justice.

The three dimensions of organizational justice – distributive, procedural and interactional are considered as separate constructs but having close relationship with one another and together determine the employee perception of organizational justice.

## 2.2 GENDER DIFFERENCES AND JUSTICE PERCEPTION

Differences in gender as a correlate for perceptual differences towards the dimensions of organizational justice have been researched upon and there exists no unanimity in results. Gender differences contributing for the differences in justice perception towards the elements of organizational justice have been confirmed by researchers. Studies have proven that the valuation of and the importance attached to the dimensions of justice also differed by gender. Gender differences in justice perception was confirmed in the work of Leventhal and Lane [7] and the authors have established that male perception of distributive justice was governed by self-interest and that of females was concerned with group welfare. The degree of reaction towards inequitable outcomes was found to be strong in male in comparison with female by Brockner and Adsit [3].

Kulik et.al [6] explored the underlying factors that account for the differences between men and women towards their perception of justice in the legal environment. One of the identified factors was "chivalry bias" through which the system is built in a manner that favored women and the second factor was "group value theory", which reasons that women value outcome favorability. Gender differences were found as moderately significant factor for the perceptual difference towards distributive justice and no gender differences existed towards perception of procedural justice.

Perceptual differences between men and women as regards the importance attached to the dimensions of justice was analyzed and men were found to value distributive justice and its related outcomes and women valued procedural justice and its related outcomes was proved by Sweeney and McFarlin [9]. Women were proven to give high importance to interactional justice than distributive and procedural justice in the work of Simpson and Kaminski [8].

The meta-analytic study by Altinkurt et.al [1] found gender and seniority to have a weak effect on organizational justice perception. The study by Tessema et.al [10] investigated the differences in employee perception based on their gender and educational qualification towards the three dimensions of organizational justice and it was concluded that perceptual differences with respect to gender was found to be significant with distributive and interactional justice but not with procedural justice. Educational qualification was significant factor for the perceptual differences towards distributive and procedural justice but not with interactional justice. Gender differences contributing towards perceptual differences towards organizational justice dimensions found the fairness perception to be high among females than males in the work of Ansari et.al [2].

## 2.3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical support for perceptual differences towards organizational justice between men and women is reasoned on the following factor that have been identified to be a cause for perceptual differences – factors in perceiver (personality, mental set, attribution, first impression and stereotyping). Among the factors in perceiver, stereotyping and personality traits holds significance for this research work. Stereotyping has been defined as a common belief that society has towards individuals who belong to a particular group/ category. Gender stereotyping refers to attributing male specific and female specific characteristics. Categorization of gender as male and female and stereotypical features/ characteristics associated with each category lends for the perceptual differences. Organizations consist of employees of all categories (male and female), hence employees belonging to a particular category (male and female) are supposed to differ in their perception based on the category to which they belong to.

Personality traits are the characteristics that are considered to be long lasting in an individual. Traits are established to differ according to the gender of the individuals. Masculinity as a personality trait associated with men is characterized by aggressive and ambitious qualities and femininity as a personality trait associated with women is characterized by sensitive and caring qualities. The differences in the trait specific characteristics accounts for the perceptual differences.

## 3. HYPOTHESIS

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondent and perception towards distributive justice.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondent and perception towards procedural justice.

*H<sub>3</sub>*: There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondent and perception towards interactional justice.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1 SAMPLE

The respondents for the study are professionals employed in the Information Technology industry in Coimbatore district. The sample size is 173. Convenience sampling technique was employed to reach out to the respondents.

##### 4.2 TIME PERIOD

The time during which the data collection was done was from November 2021 to January 2022.

##### 4.3 INSTRUMENT USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaire was constructed using 5-point Likert scale to tap the respondent perception towards the three dimensions of organizational justice.

##### 4.4 ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire on organizational justice captured the three dimensions – distributive, procedural and interactional justice with 11 attributes. The respondents rated the attributes on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree).

- The attributes of distributive justice taken up are – fairness in reward allocation according to experience, fairness in reward allocation according to efforts, fairness in workload and fairness in promotion.
- The attributes of procedural justice are – unbiased decisions, participative decision making, information accuracy in decisions and equal treatment to employees.
- The attributes of interactional justice are – politeness in communication, dignity in communication and on time communication for information accuracy.

##### 4.5 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed by Correlation, Regression and Pair wise comparison in Anova using SPSS version 23.

#### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table.1. Correlation between Gender and the Dimensions of Organizational Justice

	Gender	Distributive Justice	Procedural Justice	Interactional Justice
Gender	1			
Distributive Justice	.763	1		
Procedural Justice	.754	.980	1	
Interactional Justice	.658	.916	.938	1

The correlation values from Table.1 indicates a strong relation between gender of the respondent and the three dimensions of justice. The correlation between gender and distributive justice at .763; between gender and procedural justice at .754; between gender and interactional justice at .658 indicate a positive relation between gender and the three dimensions of organizational justice. Thus, gender of the respondents is found to be strongly related with all the dimensions of organizational justice.

##### 5.1 TEST OF HYPOTHESIS H<sub>1</sub>

Table.2. Pairwise Comparison of Gender for Distributive justice

(I) Gender (J) Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male Female	-6.689*	.673	.000	-8.031	-5.347

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The significance value for gender (.000) from Table.2 is less than the level of significance at 5% (<.05) leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>. From the mean difference values, it can be inferred that female respondents have a greater importance for distributive justice in comparison with male respondents.

##### 5.2 TEST OF HYPOTHESIS H<sub>2</sub>

Table.3. Pairwise Comparison of Gender for Procedural justice

(I) Gender (J) Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male Female	-6.405*	.663	.000	-7.726	-5.084

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The significance value for gender (.000) from Table.3 is less than the level of significance at 5% (<.05) leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>. From the mean difference values it can be inferred that female respondents have a greater importance for procedural justice in comparison with male respondents.

##### 5.3 TEST OF HYPOTHESIS H<sub>3</sub>

Table.4. Pairwise Comparison of Gender for Interactional justice

(I) Gender (J) Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male Female	-3.749*	.510	.000	-4.765	-2.732

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The significance value for gender (.000) from Table.4 is less than the level of significance at 5% (<.05) leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>. From the mean difference values, it can be inferred that female respondents have a greater importance for interactional justice in comparison with male respondents.

Table.5. Regression Analysis Table

	<b>Distributive Justice</b>	<b>Procedural Justice</b>	<b>Interactional Justice</b>
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.582	.568	.432
<b>Beta</b>	.763	.754	.658
<b>Sig.</b>	.000	.000	.000

Predictor: (Constants), Gender

The R<sup>2</sup> value from Table.5 indicates that gender accounts for 58.2% perceptual variance in distributive justice, 56.8% variance in procedural justice and 43.2% variance in interactional justice.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the significance values from Table.2-Table.4 it is proven that gender is a significant factor for perceptual differences towards the dimensions of organizational justice. Men and women differ in their perception towards distributive, procedural and interactional justice. The mean difference values have confirmed women as giving greater importance for all the three dimensions of organizational justice than men. Perception of women towards fairness in outcome distribution, fairness in organizational decision-making process and fairness in communication is high. It can be concluded that differences in perceiver factors such as stereotyping and traits associated with a particular category of gender accounts for the differences in fairness perception. The results of the study are in conformity with the work of Ansari et.al [2] in whose research work it was confirmed that females had a higher level of fairness perception towards all the dimensions of organizational justice.

## 7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Employee perception of justice will affect his/her outcome and behavior. Employees act and react on the basis of what they see within the organization. Hence managers must ensure that every factor that influences an employee perception is appropriately showcased for perceptual accuracy. With the results supporting gender as a correlate for justice perception, managers must devise strategies to ensure that reward allocation, decision making and communication process within the organization are designed and implemented in a manner that is appealing to the perception of both male and female employees.

## 8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The result of this research work is based on the survey conducted among employees in the information technology

industry. Generalization of results to other industry needs further investigation for the following reason – all the employees (male and female) in the information technology industry are all educated (graduates) and education is a factor that have been proven to shape justice perception. Education of men and women might be an influencing factor for their perception of fairness. The research work of Tessema et.al [10] have proven education as a factor that is instrumental in the perceptual differences towards the distributive and procedural dimensions of organizational justice. Hence in industries where men and women differ in their educational qualification (graduates and non-graduates), their perceived fairness towards the dimensions of justice may differ which needs further investigation. Perceptual differences between men and women based on their differences in educational qualification needs analysis.

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