

Examining the role of Organizational Justice and Perception of Politics on Work-Engagement of Faculty members in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Treating employees fairly is of utmost importance to organizations. Organizations should ensure that both processes and outcomes are just and fair and that the organizational practices are equitable. Perception of Justice ensures the commitment of employees towards organizational goals. Work engagement is an emotional connect that employees have with their job. This relationship is determined many organizational, group and individual factors. The purpose of this investigation was to determine the role of Organizational Justice (OJ) and perception of politics on faculty work engagement in higher educational institutions. The association between Perception of Politics (POP) and Work Engagement (WE) is yet to be understood in the academic context. Colleges and Universities play a significant role in shaping the future and career of its students. Teachers' in these institutions encourage and influence the students to pursue real-time research which helps in solving the problems in the world. Hence, it is absolutely necessary for the institutions to gain the loyalty and satisfaction of the teachers'. 273 faculty members with more than two years of experience were chosen for the present investigation. Three standardized, reliable and valid instruments were administered to measure the constructs under investigation. The results indicated that faculty experienced a moderate level of Organizational Justice and Politics in their workplace, and high levels of Work Engagement. Organizational justice influenced work engagement of faculty. However, perception of politics did not influence work engagement. The findings of the study add to the theoretical literature and also contribute in suggesting ways to build a truly inspired workforce.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Organizational Justice, Perception of Politics, Work Engagement, Organizational Behaviour.

I. INTRODUCTION

Practically all organizations experience political activities at some level or the other and educational institutions don't seem to be any different. Almost every workplace has employees bonding on the basis of certain common grounds and attempting to stay influential in the organisation or influence organisational decisions for their benefits, which lays the foundation of organisational politics. Although organisational politics is an inevitable bi-product of full time employment, it is healthy only up to an extent, after which it becomes obnoxious.

Organisational Justice is the extent of fairness of an organisation towards its employees in terms of equal rewards and recognition, equal opportunities, equal work load, equal information and safety against discrimination.

Organisational politics eventually influences the fairness of an organisation to an extent by way of disparity of wages among groups, discrimination, lack of recognition, etc. When organisational politics exceeds its limit and organisational justice is imbalanced, employees' involvement, dedication, will to work and sense of belonging takes a hit. Further, it also directly impacts the performance of the employee which is reflected in terms of lack of productivity, inability to meet deadlines, intention to quit the job and reluctance to take challenging assignments and hence impacts the Work Engagement of faculty members. However, the extent to which organisational politics and justice impact engagement is however subjective and unclear.

Organizational politics is regarded by the employees as the concept of the organization that considers the workplace is politically inclined and unjust [1]. It was defined by Ferris., Adams., Kolodinsky., Hochwarter & Ammeter (2002) [2] as “a form of employee behavior that uses power strategically to achieve outcomes and maximize self-interests, which do not necessarily match the organization’s goals.” Politics in the organization creates “a negative perception by the employees that they work in an unjust and unfair environment which make them dissatisfied and as a result they are compelled either to quit from department or organization” [3].

Greenberg (1990) [4] defines organizational justice as “the extent to which the employees consider that the organizational decisions are fair.” Cropanzano., Bowen and Gilliland (2007) [5] have considered organizational justice as “a personal evaluation about the ethical and moral standing of managerial conduct” and further elaborate that justice in the modern times is descriptive, i.e., justice is ascertained on how the action is perceived and not the action itself

Schaufeli., Salanova., Gonzáles-Roma and Bakker (2002) [6] define work engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” Work engagement is vital as it contributes to the positive outcomes of the employees such as increased performance, commitment and satisfaction in the job [7]. An engaged employee is completely involved and immersed in their work and is able to act on the goals of the organization willingly [8].

Many studies ascertain the role of organizational justice in the performance and work engagement of the employees [9, 10, 11, 12]. But the roles of the components of OJ in JP & WE has not been attained. Studies also acknowledged the deficiency of the scales used to measure perception of organizational justice, supervisory support, organizational politics, work engagement and job performance in their questionnaires which decreased the reliability of their results slightly [12].

Although there are four dimensions to organizational justice, there is a limitation of studies that deal with all of them. Most studies only focus on distributive and interpersonal dimensions [13].

Studies have been found that out the effects of OJ, politics and WE of employees in the private and public sector industries [13, 14, 15], however, studies on faculty in the education sector especially in the higher education field is scarce.

The major objective of this study was to identify the role of Perception of Politics and Organizational Justice of faculty members in higher educational institutions and its influence on Work-Engagement.

II. THEORY

A. OJ and WE

OJ is of utmost importance for the proper functioning of the organization. The term was coined by Greenberg in 1987 and is concerned with fairness related activities in the workplace. Sharma & Yadav (2018) [16] investigated the relationship between OJ and WE. It was observed from the results that a positive and strong relationship was established between OJ and WE of the employees in which trust in the organization mediated the relationship. Yadav & Yadav (2016) [17] undertook a study of the approaches, dimensions and consequences of organisational justice in order to understand its significance for the employees of an organisation. The authors opined that organisational justice is one of the deep rooted values of a company as employees expect fair and equitable treatment from the management.

The authors discussed various dimensions of OJ, i.e., Distributive Justice (DJ), Procedural Justice (PJ) and Interactional Justice (IJ) and found that organisational justice is one of the factors that help organisations to sustain in the long run. In the course of the study, it was observed that the factors of OJ has a strongly positive impact on organisational citizenship behavior, job performance, employee trust and helps organisations achieve their strategic goals. Kim & Park (2017) [18] determined the structure based relationship between WE, OJ and work related behavior in sustainable organizations. It was determined from the results that a procedural justice component of OJ had a prominent relationship with work engagement of the employees.

It was also added that increased work engagement increased the innovative behavior and knowledge-sharing tendencies of the employees. Javed and Tariq (2015) [19] studied the relationship between OJ, support and employee engagement. Organizational justice affects various features of employee interaction in the organization. A major relationship between organizational justice and work engagement which was mediated by organizational support from the results was established. This study investigates the relationship between OJ and WE in higher educational sector and proposes that:

H1: OJ does not influence WE of Faculty in Higher education.

B. Perception of Politics and Work Engagement

Studies pertaining to Power and Politics have been existing from the last five centuries. Many of the prominent personalities such as Aristotle, Plato and Machavelli have been some of the great scholars of Power and Politics. Burns (1961) [20] came out with the earliest literature on organizational politics who described organizational politics as a phenomenon where individuals are made of as individual resources in a competitive environment. It can be said that organizational politics are those activities which are carried out by individuals or groups of people to use power to satisfy their own personal motives in a situation [21].

The Seminal work carried out by Ferris et al. Organizational Politics can be formal or informal in nature and is used by people in workplace to influence superiors or to achieve their personal goals [22]. Referent cognitions theory [13], states that situations are perceived to be unfair when individuals can think of procedures that could have resulted in more favourable outcomes than the ones being used. If individuals cannot generate identify any other procedures that would have resulted in more favourable outcomes, then the situation is perceived as fair. Parker et al (1995) [23] had undertaken a study of the background and outcomes of employees’ perceptions of organisational politics.

In the course of the study, it was found the employees’ POP significantly influenced their perception of their working conditions. Vigoda (2000) [24] conducted a study to understand the perceptions of the employees on POP in the public sector organizations of Israel. In the course of the study, it was observed that the employee POP was negatively correlated with job attitudes, positively correlated with intention to leave and negligent behavior.

The study also found that the POP had a negative impact on employee engagement and performance. Eldor (2017) [25] researched upon the positive role of POP in the WE and performance. Organizational politics utilizes power to achieve outcomes that are not in line with the policies of the organization. It was shown that organizational politics strengthened the association between employee engagement and their performance.

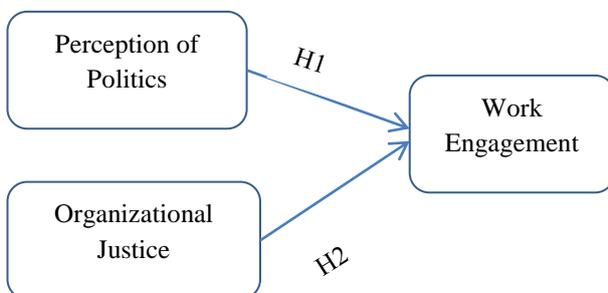
It was further elaborated that the POP as positive or negative was in the interpretation of the employee. The author also explained the employees with higher engagement took up the politics as a challenge and improved their performance. Literature suggests that there are positive and negative consequences of perception of organizational politics particularly on work-related outcomes such as Work Engagement and Job Performance.

Some of the meta-analysis studies on Perception of Politics also suggest that studies pertaining to POP and outcomes pertaining to work like work-engagement and job performance are inconclusive in nature. Very limited studies involving organizational politics and work engagement have been done in the academic context particularly in the Indian context.

Although there are a good number of studies with regard to organisational politics, most of them study the same along with other variables, such as organisational politics, employee engagement, commitments etc. There are very limited numbers of studies that deal with organisational justice as sole independent variable and there is a glaring absence of studies in the context of Indian workplaces. This study determines the relationship between POP and WE in higher educational sector and proposes that;

H2: POP does not influence WE of Faculty in Higher education.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Authors

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive & quantitative research design as the variables under investigation were continuous in nature. It integrates the components of organisational politics & organizational justice measures their impact on employee engagement. For the quantitative analysis data was collected through questionnaires and surveys. Standardised valid scales were administered to faculty in higher educational institutions across Bangalore with minimum 2 years' experience in the current organization.

Judgmental sampling method was adopted to identify the colleges and respondents. Bangalore city was divided into four zones, that is, North, South, East & West. Some of the top colleges were selected from each zone and thereby the respondents were drawn from it. The inclusion criterion for selecting the sample was minimum 2 years' experience in the current educational institution. The questionnaire was administered to over 500 respondents and 273 respondents completed the questionnaire with a 54.6 per cent response rate. Researcher has done the data collection by personally visiting the identified educational institutions to meet the respondents and administer the questionnaire.

The researcher also collected the data via Google docs. The faculty members were briefed about the main objective of the study and an informed consent was taken from them to participate in the survey.

A. Data Collection Measures

Perception of politics – 15 item Perception of politics scale (POPS), developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997)

Perception of Organizational Justice – Three different scales will be used to measure Distributive justice, Procedural justice and Interactional justice .

Perceptions of Distributive Justice were measured with the 5 item Distributive Justice Index, developed by Price and Mueller (1986) [26]

Perceptions of Procedural Justice were measured with a 6-item scale developed by Neihoff and Moorman (1993) [27]

Perceptions of Interactional justice were measured with 9-item scale developed by Neihoff and Moorman (1993) [27]

Work Engagement - To measure the Work Engagement, a 17 items version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), consisting of 6 Vigor items, 5 Dedication items, and 6 Absorption items (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) [28] was used.[28]

B. Data Analysis Tools

Analysis of the data collected was done using SPSS software and few statistical techniques like One-way ANOVA, Correlation Analysis & Regression Analysis.

C. Respondents Profile

The sample distribution comprised of 60 per cent female and 40 per cent male respondents. The inclusion criterion was met by all the respondents. Most of the respondents were UG faculty (70%) followed by PG faculty (30%). Most respondents were between 31-40 years (45%) followed by 41-50 years (26%). The total work experience of the respondents ranged between 2 to 45 years and the total experience in the current educational institute ranged between 2 to 33 years.

V. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS**Validity and reliability of standardized tools****Reliability of Organizational Justice Scale (OJ):**

The OJ tool retained the three dimensions. The three dimensions are: Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice & Interactional Justice . The Cronbach's alpha for the Procedural Justice scale was .881, Distributive Justice scale was 0.935 & for Interactional Justice Scale was 0.947 indicating very high internal consistency.

Reliability of Work Engagement Scale (WE):

The WE tool retained the three dimensions. The three dimensions are: Absorption, Vigor & Dedication. The Cronbach's alpha for the Absorption was .838, Vigor was 0.841 & for Dedication was 0.881 indicating very high internal consistency.

Reliability of Perception of Politics Scale (POP):

Only one item had low item-total correlation & was hence deleted to improve the overall Reliability of the POP scale. The total number of items reduced to 14 items. The Cronbach’s alpha for the POP scale was .801, indicating high internal consistency.

The main objective of the study was to determine how OJ and POP impacted WE of faculty in higher education. The analysis indicated that while OJ had a statistically significant impact on WE however, POP did not have an impact on WE of Faculty in higher educational institutions.

A.Objective: To measure level of POP, OJ&WE of faculty in higher educational institutions.

Higher education faculty did experience a moderate level of Politics in the workplace (3.5). They agreed that at some point of time they did experience a certain level of politics in the workplace. The faculty experienced a moderate level of OJ in the educational institutions (3.43). When we compare the sub-dimensions of Organizational Justice, Interactional Justice had the highest mean (3.6), followed by Distributive Justice (3.54) and then Procedural Justice (3.33). The faculty experience high levels of WE in the workplace (4.87) which comprised of three sub-dimensions namely Dedication (5.12), Absorption (4.94) and Vigor (4.75). This indicates that the Dedication level of faculty was really high as compared to Absorption and Vigor.

Hypothesis 1: OJ does not influence WE of Faculty in Higher education.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Model Summary, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Coefficient values of Organizational Justice (OJ) and Its Influence of Work Engagement (WE)

		OJ	IJ	DJ	PJ	WE
	Mean	3.43	3.6	3.54	3.33	4.87
	SD	0.775	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.88
Model Summary	R2	0.228				
ANOVA	F	7.908				
	Sig	0.005				
Coefficient	B (constant)		0.26	0.13	0.37	
	t		0.28	1.00	2.61	
	Sig		0.01	0.02	0.009	

Source: The authors.

Table 1 indicates that OJ and its sub-dimensions have a significant influence on WE of Faculty in higher educational institutions. Organizational Justice predicts 22.8 per cent of the variance and significantly predicts Work Engagement at a p-value of 0.005. Hence, H1 is rejected and the alternate hypothesis that Organizational Justice significantly impacts Work Engagement of higher education faculty is accepted.

H2: POP does not influence Work Engagement of Faculty in Higher education.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics, Model Summary, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Coefficient values of Perception of Politics (POP) and Its Influence of Work Engagement (WE)

		POP	Model Summary	ANOVA	Coefficient			
	Mean	SD	R2	F	Sig	B	t	Sig

OJ	3.5	0.531	0.005	0.006	0.94	0.009	0.075	0.94
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Source: The authors.

Table 2 indicates that Perception of Politics does not have a significant influence of Work Engagement of Faculty in higher educational institutions. Hence H2 is accepted.

It can be said that the higher education faculty’s perception of politics does not predict their level of Work Engagement in higher educational institutes. This result obtained is contrary to many studies that have been conducted earlier with respect to Perception of Politics (POP).

B. Discussion

As it is well-know that teachers’ play an important role in nation building. They are responsible for shaping the next generation and contribute to the personal and professional growth of students. Their loyalty, commitment and satisfaction play a major role in exercising their roles as teachers. There have been plenty of studies conducted with respect to school teachers however; limited studies have been carried out in purview of higher education faculty members. Hence, the current study makes an attempt to contribute to the literature on higher education faculty.

Organizational justice creates an atmosphere of satisfaction and increased out-role work of the employees as a result of perception of fair treatment by the management. The treatment of the employees and meeting their expectations is important for the management, especially in higher education sector, as the future lives of several students are involved [29]. The unfair treatment of the teachers leads to their dissatisfaction in their thereby affecting the teaching quality of the university or college [30]. This affects the reputation of the institution as well. As the study predicted, that Organizational Justice and its sub-dimensions significantly influences Work Engagement of higher education faculty members, the management and the Head of the educational institutions need to realize that perception of justice by faculty is important to result in highly engaged and dedicated faculty members which in turn can result in good quality students who are actually the brand ambassadors for any college or university. As seen in Table 1, the mean values of all three sub-dimensions of OJ namely DJ, PJ and IJ are just at a moderate level. The mean value of IJ is only slightly higher than DJ and PJ. Higher levels of IJ could be a result of perceived fairness in interaction between the faculty and their immediate superiors.

However, as DJ and PJ levels are relatively lower, it indicates that higher education faculty does not perceive fairness in terms or rewards or other monetary incentives and institutional procedures such as promotion and recognition procedures. It could also indicate gender discrimination as majority of the respondents in this study were women. Further studies could be done to determine if there is perceived gender or age related differences across perception of justice. Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland (2007) [5] examined the management of justice in an organization.

Justice has been found to be the main component in an organization that affects the affinity between the team members thereby enhancing their performance in work. Employee engagement is a vital factor for the success of the organization which the employers are trying to encourage. From the theory of social exchange, organizational justice was found to be the most encouraging factor for employees to be highly engaged in their work as they perceive that the organization is treating them fairly [19].

There is no organization which is devoid of politics including educational institutions. Some of the studies have found that organizational politics varied from one university to another and depended on the tenure of the faculty teaching in the university [31]. Most of the politics was related to gender discrimination wherein women faculty members were isolated and were denied benefits of the organization [32].

As seen in Table 2, Perception of Politics (POP) does not significantly influence Work Engagement of higher education faculty. The main reason for this contradiction is that most of the studies revolving around POP have been conducted in corporates and very limited studies have considered POP as a variable in their studies in the field of higher education particularly in the Indian context.

The literature indicates positive and negative consequences of POP. The negative consequences of POP as per literature indicate that it can lead to decreased WE[33, 34]. However, there are positive consequences too for

POP, which indicate that POP can lead to increased WE (Eldor, 2017). Eldor in 2017 conducted a study where POP moderated the relationship between Work Engagement and Work related behaviours such as creativity, proactivity, knowledge sharing and adaptivity and found that employees are more engaged when they notice that their workplace to be political.

Ugwu and Onyishi (2013) [35] attempted to explore the relationship between employees' POP on their engagement at work in the context of Nigerian universities. It was observed that General political behaviour impacted employee engagement positively, while politics with respect to pay and promotion negatively impacted vigor, dedication and absorption of the faculty.

Some of the literature focusing of the meta-analysis of POP with various work related outcomes have stated that based on the earlier research on relationship between POP and work related outcomes such as job involvement, job stress, organizational commitment, job performance and work engagement has borne inconsistent results and therefore, there is a need for further study [36].

In addition to the above literature, another reason for this non-significance between POP and Work Engagement could be the Collegiality approach in educational institutions. Educational institutions possess a well-designed faculty code of conduct which invokes collegial behaviour between faculty members. Collegial behaviour includes co-operating, collaborating, showing support to other faculty members, reduced politics, engaging in social interactions and receiving open communication from heads and peers resulting in increased productivity, efficiency and engagement [37].

C.Implications

The job of a teacher is considered as one of the most stressful professions in the world after that of a doctor's. Many teachers often complain of severe burnout thus taking a toll on their health and their personal life. High levels of work engagement can actually protect an individual from burnout [38].

Thus, low levels of work engagement of faculty members can result in poor performance and low quality of teaching. As seen in the results, Organizational Justice impacts the Work Faculty engagement in higher educational institutions. Hence the management of higher educational institutions is advised to provide a sense of justice to all the faculty members. The faculty could be provided with fair pay without any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender, age or any other demographics. They could be rewarded with their fair share of recognition and rewards inclusive of both monetary and non-monetary aspects. All the decisions by the Heads of the departments and the top management could be taken in a very objective manner based on facts and figures. The decisions taken could be conveyed to the faculty members with dignity and respect. Politics in educational institutions could be reduced by reinforcing a strong professionalism, co-operation, collaboration & a proper code of conduct between the faculty members.

D.Limitations

The research work was carried out only in the higher education sector thereby limiting its scope. However the study could be generalized to al larger group and faculty in other geographical locations as we have ensured the representation of faculty from some of the top higher educational institutions.

The questionnaire was a little lengthy which required 15 minutes of time to be filled by each respondent. Hence, there could be time related barriers to responses obtained. However, the researchers have personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents and some items were reverse coded in order to minimize bias.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study explores the relationship between faculty perceptions towards OJ inclusive of its factors namely DJ, PJ and IJ and their WE comprising of Vigor, Dedication & Absorption. Fairness in the educational institutions is truly important to enhance the faculty engagement. Educational institutions should encourage fairness in all aspects which can result in highly engaged faculty members thereby contributing to quality education. All educational institutions should adopt a collegial system thereby enhancing mutual support and trust between the faculty colleagues and the heads of the departments.

The study suggests that researchers could further this study by examining the relationships and influence of other work-related constructs such as OCB, Job Performance etc. in higher education sector and identify other constructs which could influence the WE of faculty members in higher educational institutions in the Indian context.

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