

# The Mediating Effect of Affective Organizational Commitment in the Relationship between Organizational Justice and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Conceptual Model

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## Abstract

A literature review revealed that the effect of organizational justice on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) had been heavily examined as an overall relationship. However, there is a lack of research that examined the effect of organizational justice dimensions on OCB via affective organizational commitment as a mediator. Therefore, this research is an attempt to provide a value theoretical model that explains the relationships between dimensions of organizational justice and OCB as well as tries to describe in detail meaning of this relationship through the mediating effect of affective organizational commitment in the context of social exchange theory. Furthermore, the proposed hypotheses on the link between these variables are provided as a foundation for further research.

**Keywords:** Affective Organizational Commitment, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Organizational Justice

## 1. Introduction

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is recognized as an important priority that every organization has to consider for the purpose of improving and utilizing its human resources and to sustain its viability in the worldwide competitive environment (Benjamin, 2012). Based on organizational behavior theories, OCB have an accumulative positive effect on organizational functioning, improves efficiency and employees' participation, encourages teamwork, reduces the costs of mistakes and provides a good work environment (Taghinezhad et al., 2015; Shim & Rohrbaugh, 2014). Because of its significant in the performance and survival of organizations, OCB is currently one of the topics extensively studied in the field of organizational behavior (Bahrami, Montazeralfaraj, Gazar, & Tafti, 2014). Therefore, several researchers pay more efforts in studying the different factors that may have relationships with OCB (AbuTayeh & Bandar, 2012; Ahmadi, Ahmadi & Taverah, 2011; Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013; Sahafi et al., 2011; Tziner & Sharoni, 2014). Thus, the current research tries to investigate the probable relationships between organizational justice, affective organizational commitment (AOC) and OCB.

A review of fifty-five studies conducted by Organ and Ryan (1995), indicated that among the different variables, organizational justice and AOC are key determinates of OCB. Recent empirical studies have shown that the organizational justice is a powerful predictor of OCB (Ahmadi et al., 2011; Muhammad, 2014; Zaitouni, 2016). However, organizational justice is a multidimensional approach (Elamin & Tlaiss, 2015) as multiple forms of justices (Golparvar & Rafizadeh, 2010), and existing studies on organization-employee relations have taken a very narrow perspective. As a multidimensional construct, organizational justice has been conceptualized as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Sulander et al., 2016; Chan & Lai, 2016; Hart et al., 2016). However, the effect of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice on OCB is yet to be considered. Therefore, this study takes this endeavor and use three dimensions of organizational justice namely: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice to determine the individual influence on OCB.

The literature suggests that dimensions of organizational justice, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justices were positively and significantly related to AOC (Bahrami et al., 2014). However, the effect of these dimensions on the AOC has not been fully investigated, particularly in the public organizations. On the other hand, several other studies posit that AOC was found to be a critical mediating variable that facilitates

proactive OCB (López-Cabarcos et al., 2015; Ünal, 2013; Muhammad, 2014). Nevertheless, the mediating role of AOC has not been fully examined, particularly on the relationship between three dimensions of organizational justice, namely, distributive, procedural, and interactional justices and OCB. Therefore, the present study tries to explore the relationship between organizational justice's dimensions and OCB through the AOC.

## 2. Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB has become a commonly used axiom in achieving organizational effectiveness. The significance of OCB is dependent on the fact that the survival of any organization always rely on it is the capability to create a personnel who exhibit constructive behaviors as a good citizen of the organization. OCB is defined as a behavior which is discretionary and goes beyond the contractual roles in a way that improves the overall performance of the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2009). OCB refers to the activities employees perform in a way that goes beyond what is required of them without having any extra reward (Vivek, 2016). It is considered as a key determinant of maximizing the efficiency and productivity of the organizations and the employees (Shim & Rohrbaugh, 2014). A contemporary meta-analysis conducted by Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, and Gardner (2011) classified OCB into two different aspects such as pro-social (directed toward individuals or organization) and proactive (change-oriented). The pro-social concept refers to behavior that directly benefits the organization and other persons. The proactive relates to the employee's contribution of positive changes to the organization. Based on the above definitions, OCB is a voluntary individual behavior that is not recognized directly by the official reward scheme and enhances the effectiveness of the organization.

OCB is a multi-dimensional construct (Markóczy, Vora, & Xin, 2009; Becton & Field, 2008; Chan & Lai, 2016). As a multidimensional construct, the OCB consists of five dimensions, namely altruism, civic virtue, sportsmanship, courtesy and conscientiousness (Organ, 1988; Demirkiran, Taskaya & Dinc, 2016). Altruism can be represented in different ways such as voluntarily helping new employees and co-workers from other departments and assisting workers who were absent (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). The conscientiousness is viewed as a set of behaviors that are directed toward organizations as the first beneficiary (Hoffman et al., 2007) and not for any specific individual (Organ, 1997). Courtesy is represented by the employee who observes something that may lead to problem existence and treat it before it exists and leaves the organizational facilities in a good situation to enable other coworkers to use it (Organ et al., 2006). Organ (1990) described sportsmanship as "a willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions of work without complaining. Podsakoff et al. (2000) indicated that employee who represents sportsmanship actions has the willingness to sacrifices his personal interest for the purpose of organizational resources conservation. Civic virtue is defined as the discretionary behavior in which the employee is highly involved in the life of the organization as a good citizen (Podsakoff et al., 2000) who constructively contributes to the organizational concerns (Law, Wong & Chen, 2005). These dimensions, in fact, represent how the employees recognize themselves as a part of their organizations (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

## 3. Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is described as the employees' perception of fairness in social and economic interactions within the organization (Beugre, 1998). It is an employee's personal evaluation of the ethical propriety of their employer (Cropanzano et al., 2007). According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the useful exchange of one partner treatment would lead to reciprocity on the part of the other partner exchange. For example, when employees feel that they have been unfairly treated, OCB levels will be affected which in turn leads to decreased effectiveness of the organization and threaten the organization survival (Babaei and Mafian, 2016). In contrast, if the employee feels that he or she is treated fairly, he or she would exhibit better superior performance. Garg et al. (2013) described the organizational justice as the employee attitude that may lead to favorable actions which result in OCB. Thus, the organization that focuses on justice can be used to predict the OCB (Lavelle et al., 2009).

However, the organizational justice has been recently defined as the extent in which the design of the organizational settings is done to offer all employees the same degree of equity and fairness (Karim & Rehman, 2012; Salehi, Aslani & Moradi, 2014). Hence, the concept of organizational justice can be considered a crucial factor to understand the behaviors of employees in the different organizations (Tastan, 2013) and at the same time can be used to explain why employees consider some organizations more credible than others (Vazifeh Damirchi et al., 2013). Organizational justice has a major effect on several organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to leave the job and OCB (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, et al., 2001; Loi, Hang Yue, and Foley, 2006). At the same time, organizational justice has been examined extensively by scholars as a key determinant that influences OCB (Walumbwa et al. 2010; Greenberg,

2010; Colquitt et al., 2013; Erkutlu, 2011). Hence, organizational justice is proposed to influence the OCB.

The organizational justice is defined as a multi-dimensional concept that consists of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Elamin & Tlaiss, 2015; Chan & Lai, 2016; Ismail & Daud, 2016). Altamna and AlShawy (2011) pointed out that organizational justice can be viewed through the employee's awareness of the three dimensions: procedural, distributive and interactional. Several researchers highlighted three dimensions of organizational justice that are procedural, distributive and interactional justice (Erkutlu, 2011; Guangling, 2011). Procedural justice is more focused on the processes that deliver the organizational decisions, while distributive justice concerned more on content or outcome such as pay and rewards (DeConinck, 2010; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992), whereas interactional justice is more focused on employees' reactions towards their supervisors (Cropanzano et al., 2002). However, quite a few studies in organizational behavior literature have investigated organizational justice dimensions (procedural, distributive and interactional) as separate variables. More precisely, it is still not clear any of the elements of organizational justice has a strong effect in predicting OCB. In the current research, we, therefore, take up three dimensions of organizational justice, namely procedural, distributive and interactional justice to specify which one of them may have a strong effect on OCB.

### *3.1 Distributive Justice*

Distributive justice, the first studied element of organizational justice, is defined as the employee's perceived fairness of the output distribution made by their supervisors or organizations (Colquitt et al., 2010). Distributive justice describes how an employee evaluates the organizational outcomes distribution, regarding its fairness (Colquitt et al., 2013). Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013) suggested that employees measure the outcome distribution fairness by comparing their input-outcome ratios against that of their co-workers for the same work category. Given the employee, when he or she treated in an unfair way in term of comparing his/her input- outcome ratio with other colleague's input- outcome ratio, he/she may change his/her behavior by decreasing his input to the organization (Loi et al., 2006). From a social exchange view, employees follow distributive justice because they expect favorable results that are commensurate with their investment in the organization, such as the time and effort (i.e., pay and benefits).

### *3.2 Procedural Justice*

Procedural justice refers to the employee's perception of how fair the organization and its representatives allocate decisions (Tepper, Duffy & Henle, 2006). It is the employees' perception of fairness regarding procedures that are used deliver outcome decisions in organizations (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; At Yassine, Hammouri, & Aljaradat, 2013). Procedural justice explains how consistent, accurate, representative and ethical are the processes used to determine organizational decisions that control the outcomes distributed among employees (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Abu Elanain (2010) suggested that when the staff lacks the perceptions of procedural justice, the organization should expect a low level of OCB. In contrast, when employees realize that procedures are fair, they are willing to accept decisions, even if they are not completely satisfied with the results (Colquitt et al., 2001).

### *3.3 Interactional Justice*

Interactional justice is defined as the perception of the quality of the communications from decision makers to employees regarding explanation and implementation of formal justice procedures (Yilmaz, 2010). Interactional justice can be categorized into two groups: informational and interpersonal justice (Colquitt, 2001). Interpersonal justice is referred to the employee's belief that their employer has treated them in such respectful and honorable way. On the other hand, informational justice is employee's perception of fairness based on the explanation they received to clarify the procedures and the way that how the outcomes are distributed. In addition, interactional justice refers to different forms such as employees respect among each other's, obeying the organization rules and regulations and the decision fairness they perceive (Karakose, 2014). In view of social exchange theory, the role of interactional justice in the workplace is the quality of treatment employee get on the job (Coetzee, 2014; Cropanzano et al., 2002).

## **4. Affective Organizational Commitment**

AOC refers to "an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 67). In other words, AOC is the belonging perceptions and attachment feelings toward the organization (Akanbia & Ofoegbu, 2013; Mensah et al., 2016). Lavelle, Brockner, and Konovsky (2009) reported that AOC is considered a significant predictor of organizational behavior of the employee. Snyder and Cistulli (2011) described AOC as the high emotional attachment that pushes an employee to retain as a member of the organization. It is reported that an employee who has a strong affective commitment would have greater

motivation to engage in OCBs and consequently achieve the organizational objectives (Siders, George, and Dharwadkar, 2000).

Interestingly, AOC has been studied extensively as a form of engagement (Lavelle et al. 2009), since it is frequently used as a proxy for organizational commitment (Caillier, 2015). As pointed out by Kim (2014), AOC influences the both behavioral intention and behavior of individual employees in the organization. In particular, AOC has been positively associated with OCB (Hausknecht, Hiller & Vance, 2008; Jain, 2016). Importantly, AOC is considered a crucial mediating variable that facilitates proactive initiative (López-Cabarcos et al., 2015). More precisely, AOC has a mediating effect on the relationship between antecedent variables and OCB (Allen & Rush, 1998). Ünal (2013) proved that AOC has a mediating effect on the relationship between job satisfaction and OCB. Hence, AOC offers possible evidence in the relationship between organizational justice dimensions and OCB. Accordingly, it is more likely that AOC may play a prominent role in explaining the relationship between organizational justice dimensions and OCB in light of the social exchange theory. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the mediating effect of AOC on the relationship between organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and OCB.

## 5. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

### 5.1 Relationship between Organizational Justice Dimensions and OCB

The organizational justice has been identified as an important factor that influences OCB (Organ, 1990). Empirically, Ishak and Alam (2009) found that organizational justice dimensions play a significant role in determining OCB. Naami (2006) showed that all three dimensions of organizational justices namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice have an active and direct influence on OCB. Among the different variables of organizational justice, interactional justice is the one that has a critical role to be a predictor of OCB (Erkutlu, 2010; Farahbod, Azadehdel, Rezaei & Nezhadi, 2012; Al-Hyasat, Al Shra'ah, & Abu Rumman, 2013). Other empirical studies have shown that the procedural justice is a key determinant that influences the OCB (Chiaburu and Lim, 2008; Cropanzano Preha & Chen, 2002; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). Tabarsa et al. (2010) discovered that procedural justice, directly and indirectly, influenced OCB. Other researchers showed that distributive justice towards OCB is positively correlated (Colquitt et al., 2001; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; Ince & Gul, 2011). Therefore, based on the above discussion and considering organizational justice dimensions as important determinants of OCB, the current study assumes the following hypothesis:

H1a: Distributive Justice is positively related to OCB.

H1b: Procedural Justice is positively related to OCB.

H1c: Interactional justice is positively related to OCB.

### 5.2 Relationship between Organizational Justice Dimensions and AOC

Several researchers reported that organizational justice influence AOC (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Ohana, 2014). Guh et al. (2013) suggested that organizational justice has a positive influence on AOC. In the government's context, Kim, Kolb, and Kim (2015) confirmed that procedural justice significantly influences the AOC. Distributive justice has been identified as a significant predictor of AOC (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993). Procedural justice was also found to be the strongest variable that influences AOC (Loi et al., 2006). In a similar vein, the employee's perceptions of procedural justice have been found to be a positively related with AOC (Ahmed, 2014). Turgut et al. (2012) proposed that AOC is affected by both distributive and Interactional justice. Guh et al., (2013) reported that distributive, procedural, and interactional justices were positively and significantly related to AOC. Thus, the second proposition of this research would be:

H2a: Distributive Justice is positively related to AOC.

H2b: Procedural Justice is positively related to AOC.

H2c: Interactional justice is positively related to AOC.

### 5.3 Relationship between AOC and OCB

In the literature on AOC support, committed employees would reciprocate with positive work outcomes toward their organizations (Huang, You and Tsai, 2012; Imran, Arif, Cheema, & Azeem, 2014). More precisely, employees with high AOC towards their organizations would have higher commitment level, which in turn leads to increasing their OCB (Jha, 2011). Affectively dedicated employees generate benefits for their organizations including greater voluntary dedication and involvement in the organizational life (Cha, Cichy, & Kim, 2010). Supporting this view, Ng and Feldman (2010) suggested that employees with AOC will have the tendency to reciprocate with OCB. Evidence suggests that increased employees' commitment in the workplaces promote

their OCB towards organizations (Mohamed & Yeo, 2014). The AOC is shown to be empirically related to OCB (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2005; Kim, 2014). Empirical studies have been recently found that AOC positively influences OCB (Benjamin, 2012; Kang, Gatling & Kim, 2015). Huang et al. (2012) found that AOC significantly influences OCB. Based on the above, it is proposed that:

H3: AOC is positively related to OCB.

#### *5.4 The Mediating Role of AOC in the Relationship between Organizational Justice Dimensions and OCB*

Several researchers have argued that organizational justice elements namely distributive, procedural and interactional are antecedents of AOC (Colquitt et al. 2013; Ghafourian, 2014; Alizadeh, and Ebrahim, 2015). AOC is the result of organizational justice elements which leads to OCB (Guh et al., 2013). AOC has a critical mediating role and a direct positive relationship with OCB (Farazaneh, Farashah, and Kazemi, 2014; Lavelle et al., 2009) as a major determinant of OCB (Benjamin, 2012; Kang, Gatling, and Kim, 2015). The relationships between organizational justice, AOC and OCB can be logically explained in terms of social exchange. For example, perceived organizational justice increases AOC via creating an emotional obligation to increase the OCB and then help the organization to achieve its goals. As a whole, this conceptual evidence proposes that organizational justice would influence AOC which in turn predicts OCB.

In line with this conceptual rationale, it is thus logical to assume that organizational justice dimensions have an influence on OCB by enhancing AOC. Several studies examined AOC as a mediator between job satisfaction → OCB (Ünal, 2013), perceived organizational support → OCB (Muhammad, 2014), job burnout → OCB (Aslam, and Safdar, 2012), Job involvement → OCB (Biswas, 2008), emotional exhaustion → OCB (Tourigny et al., 2013), corporate social responsibility → OCB (Lee and Kim, 2013), personality → OCB (Purba et al., 2015) and overall organizational justice → OCB (Guh et al., 2013). However, to the best of our knowledge, no research has addressed the mediating role of AOC in the relationship between organizational justice dimensions, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice and OCB. Thus, the research proposes that AOC mediates the organizational justice dimensions – OCB relationships.

H4a: AOC mediates the relationship between distributive justice and OCB.

H4b: AOC mediates the relationship between procedural justice and OCB

H4c: AOC mediates the relationship between interactional justice and OCB.

## **6. Theoretical Implications**

Through the literature review and the findings of the empirical studies, this paper contributes to existing theories by developing a conceptual model to investigate the factors that influence OCB. The model suggests the links between dimensions of organizational justice, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice and OCB. Some of these linkages (e.g. the link between organizational justice dimensions and AOC) are not very often included in OCB models known to the research, thus this study extends existing literature in this context. Also, this research includes the mediating role of AOC on the relationship between the organizational justice dimensions and OCB in the framework, the context that has not been well studied. More specifically, this research explores the extent to which the effects of organizational justice dimensions on OCB may depend upon the effect of AOC first in the context of the social exchange theory. Thus, this paper extends the theory regarding OCB and how dimensions namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice may influence OCB via the mediating role of AOC in different organizational contexts. Moreover, this paper which shows the suggested relationships among organizational justice dimensions, AOC and OCB will help future researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of citizenship behavior of the employees in different sectors. Therefore, the proposed paradigm provides a robust model that can be examined empirically in the future studies.

## **7. Managerial Implications**

The proposed model presented in this paper has important implications for managers of human resources management and policymakers of organizations. Based on the results of this paradigm, managers of human resources can design their policies and decisions that support, satisfy and retain employees for the promoting OCB. More spastically, the expected results of the model will enable the management of human resource departments to identify which dimensions of organizational justice is more likely to influence OCB and then pay more attention to enhance it. In contrast, policymakers may use the findings as a guideline to enhance the relationship between the employees and organizations by creating justice environment in term of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice that leads to achieving higher commitment levels and OCB for the organizations. Moreover, the research model provides a chance for managers of human resources in the organization to analyze the employees' perceptions of the commitment at a high level of obligations and its

relation with the dimensions of organizational justice.

## 8. Conclusion

In sum, despite several researchers developed employee – organization relationship paradigms by providing theoretical and empirical support for relationships between organizational justice and OCB, little attention has been given to the separate influence of organizational justice dimensions on OCB, and explaining the meaning relationship between them through the investigation of the effects of AOC as a mediating variable. Thus, the current research develops an integrated model of the employee – organization relationships including both organization dimensions, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice and OCB as well as the mediating effect of AOC (Figure 1). More precisely, this paradigm expands and improves the understanding of the relationship between dimensions of organizational justice and OCB and its analysis via AOC and provides the support for further empirical research.

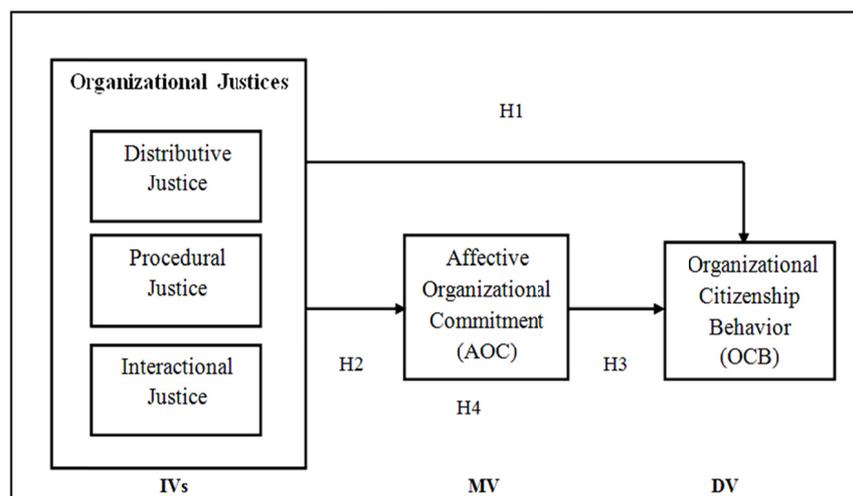


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

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