

Effects of Perceived Distributive Justice on Public Service Motivation in Public Universities in Sierra Leone

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Abstract

This study was accomplished to explore how perceived distributive justice (DJ) of the performance appraisal affects public service motivation (PSM) of public universities in Sierra Leone. A survey method was employed to assemble 320 usable questionnaires from academic employees who work at the universities. Results of correlation analysis showed that relationship between DJ and PSM are statistically significant and positively correlated. Similarly, results of regression analysis showed an even stronger relationship for affective commitment (AF). This result confirms that AF plays an important role as a mediating variable in the motivation models of the public sector sample. Thus the findings draw attention to the relevance of AF in the absence of DJ in influencing PSM.

Keywords: Distributive justice, Affective commitment, Public Service Motivation

1. Introduction

Nowadays, intense competitions and rapid growth of organizations have changed employees' beat to work which affects their physical and mental development at workplace. In a bid to understand the organizational behavior, addressing the question of how employee's behaviors and attitudes are influenced by the organizational and individual psychosomatic dynamics is inevitable (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Van Dick, 2004). Organizational justice (OJ) which fundamentally focuses on the fairness at workplace lay stronger emphasis on different attitudes of the employees like turnover intentions, absenteeism, role breadth, job performance, job satisfaction, trust, leader-member exchange, leadership and organizational commitment (OC) (see Colquitt et al., 2001; Boer et al., 2002; H. Kristl Davison et al., 2014; Greenberg, 2004; June M. L. Poon, 2012; Taehee and Marc, 2016; Taehee et al., 2015; Linda and Ann 2011).

In discussing the issue of OJ, Greenberg (1990) observes that "social scientists have long recognized the significance of the ideals of justice as an essential requirement for the successful functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction of the individuals they employ." Greenberg further confirmed the justice as the "first virtue of social institutions". OJ had three broad magnitudes such as distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Martinez-tur et al., 2006; Tallman R. et al, 2009). DJ was known as the first element of justice which emerges in the literature, refers to "the fairness of outcomes an employee receives such as pay and promotions (Moorman, 1991)". Procedural justice (PJ) was established by the Thibaut and Walker in 1975 while working in dispute resolution procedures and further delineates as "the fairness of the

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procedures used in determining employee outcomes” by the Moorman (1991) whereas interactional justice (IJ) describes as “the interpersonal treatment employees receive from decision makers and the adequacy with which the formal decision-making procedures are explained” (Greenberg, 1990).

Despite the fact that existing literature acknowledges the significance of PA justice in high performing organizations, one of the major challenges facing human resource management (HRM) is establishing both an effective and a fair PA system; nevertheless, little is recognized as regards the key organizational and psychological factors that affect employees’ perception of PA justice, especially in public organizations. In regards to employees’ perception of PA justice, most studies have focused on the structural factors rather than the cognitive or psychological perspectives. Studies have suggested that the success of the PA system may not in essence depend on the system but on how to manage employees’ perceptions of its fairness, and a good number of them have been conducted on western societies with an aggregation of the three components of PA.

In summary, numerous researches were conducted on OJ and employees’ attitudes to work. Most of these studies were carried out on western societies particularly in business context and so far limited literature is available in West African context. So, this research geared towards filling this gap by examining the extent PSM is affected by DJ alone of the PA of public universities in Sierra Leone vis-à-vis that of other West African economies. Following the introductory section, the rest of the paper commences with the theoretical framework and hypothesis development. This is followed by the description of the methodology. The empirical results and discussion are then presented. The paper finally ends with some concluding remarks and further research directions.

2.Literature Review

PA is one of the most important human resource managements (HRM) practices in organizations as it yields critical decisions integral to various human resource actions and outcomes (Jawahar, 2007; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Steensma & Visser, 2007). Implementation of PA systems remains one of the greatest challenges of effective HRM (Taylor et al., 1995). While a good PA system is expected to provide valuable information to an employee about his/her performance and progress at work, appraisal reliability and validity continue to remain a major concern for organizations and also PAs are often met with substantial resistance (Banks and Murphy, 1985; Cleveland et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1995). PA has broad implications for attitudes and behaviors in organizations (Erdogan, 2002). New Public Management (NPM) established a focus on improving public sector performance by encouraging government to establish results-oriented performance measures. Since the establishment of these reforms, both public and non-profit organizations have built performance measurement systems to cultivate and utilize performance information in response to such reforms (Wright, 2010; Moynihan & Pandey, 2010); PSM is a construct that was conceived (Rainey, 1982), defined (Perry & Wise, 1990), and assembled to address some concerns about administration in government agencies. PSM is a factor influencing behavior, particularly showing that altruistic motives assist in explaining effort, especially in caring or personal-service activities. This article does not aim to assess the success of PSM research in establishing and measuring PSM as a distinct motivation (for that, see Bozeman & Su, 2014). Instead, the questions focus on how

PSM is being influenced by DJ. The empirical scrutiny of DJ and consequences of PSM is considered an important area of research in the field of public administration. A large majority of research has treated PSM as an independent variable and demonstrated its effect on different employee outcomes (Bright, 2007, 2008, 2013; Caillier, 2014; Christensen & Wright, 2011; Giaque, Ritz, Varone, & Anderfuhren-Biget, 2012; Kim, 2012). The recent trend in public administration research is shifting toward understanding the institutional mechanisms that can shape or reduce individual employees' PSM (Houston, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2011; Vandenabeele, Schuermans, & Loopmans, 2012). According to the institutional theory perspective, PSM is individual-level manifestation of institutional-level values. The conceptualization of PSM incorporates the institutional concerns suggesting that PSM is about "motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions" (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). Our study put forward that employees' PSM is affected by their perception about DJ of the PA, where DJ capture employee's behavior to their job. In the present study, we anticipate that PSM as a form of humane motivation functions act as catalyst for organizational knowledge sharing in the public sector. If we consider PSM one of public administration's "big questions" (Behn, 1995), then we cannot claim full knowledge if surveys are limited to OECD countries, the world's most important developing country (China), and countries with transparent governance environments, but needs to be expanded to other countries across the globe like Sierra Leone.

A stream of research on justice in organizations provides a conceptual framework of understanding the employees' perceived fairness of the appraisal system (Cropanzano & Folger, 1996; Dipboye & dePontbraind, 1981; Greenberg, 1986). This research examines the employees' feeling of injustice drawn from perceptions of fair/unfair distributions of resources relative to others in organizations. This DJ focuses on people's perceived fairness of the evaluation outcomes (Greenberg, 1986). In terms of understanding the concept of PSM by public organizations, OJ theories are particularly relevant. Although PJ and IJ are certainly important for PSM (e.g., Cropanzano, Li, & Benson, 2011), our focus here is on DJ, or the fairness of outcomes or rewards (e.g., Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1976). Colquitt and Jackson (2006) suggested that certain DJ rules may be more important for judging fairness in individual versus organizational contexts.

Specifically, they put forward that the fairness rule will be more important for determining allocation of outcomes (e.g., pay raises) in public organizational contexts. Moreover, effective PA is believed to motivate employees to strive for performance improvement by linking appraisals to performance-contingent rewards (Perry, Petrakis, & Miller, 1989).

As a fast-growing field of research, PSM focuses "on the motives and actions in the public domain that are intended to do good for others and shape the well-being of society (Perry, Hondeghem & Wise, 2010). As with any vibrant theory, PSM has evolved in subtle but potentially important ways. About two decades ago, Perry and Wise defined PSM as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations". More recently, however, others have defined PSM more broadly as "a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people" (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999) or "motives associated with serving the public good" (Perry & Hondehem, 2008). These findings also raise other important questions about the ability of public sector organizations to foster PSM (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). While Perry (2000) has called for more research developing and testing the effects of organizational institutions on public service

motivation, others have noted that more research is needed to investigate the importance of PSM relative to other factors influencing job or sector choice (Leisink & Steijn 2008).

However, according to PSM theory, individuals with a strong public service orientation are attracted to government jobs. This proposition was investigated in three studies by measuring public sector motivation at a pre-entry level as an individual difference variable affecting perceptions of fit and organizational attraction. Results were consistent with a positive relationship between public sector motivation and attraction to both public sector and non-profit organizations (Carpenter, J. et. al., 2012).

DJ is generally based on the Equity theory of Adams (1965) and it is about the individual's perceptions of his or her outcomes. In other words, the DJ is the perceptions of employees about their gains and organizational resources (FitzGerald, 2002). This type of justice is focused on rewards and penalties distribution rates (Nirmala & Akhilesh, 2006) and includes the perception of employees toward the distribution of organizational resources and rewards (Blakely et al., 2005). DJ explains the similar treats towards similar individuals and different treats to different individuals according to the ethical and objective criteria (Wang et al, 2010). Similarly, Foley et al (2002) defines DJ as entreating people alike who behaves in similar ethical manners and entreating them differently when they behave in different ethical manners. Cohen, on the other hand (1987) defines the DJ as the equal allocation of resources to the employees due to the predetermined standards. Therefore, the common ground of these definitions is the existence of the predetermined objective criteria and the distribution of the organizational resources due to these criteria. The formation of positive DJ perception of the employees depends on the just performance of organizational resources. As a result, the emotions of employees about the DJ are mostly the outcome of organization (Cremer et al., 2004).

3. Conceptual Framework and summary of Hypothesis

A conceptual framework refers to the extent a researcher conceptualizes the relationship between contextual variables in the study and shows the relationship graphically or diagrammatically (Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, B., 2003). The relationship describes the association between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The framework presents a suitable model to explore how DJ of the PA affects PSM while capturing the interplay of AC.

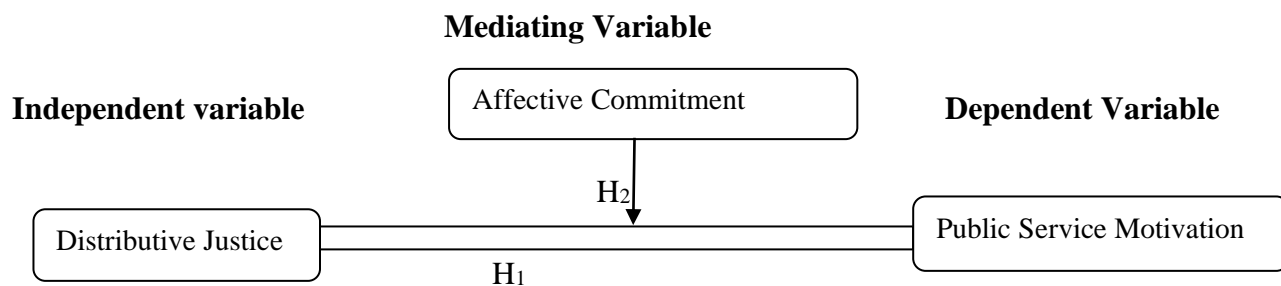


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the hypothesized model illustrating the proposed relationship between perceived DJ and PSM when mediated by AC of the OC.

Hypothesis

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H₁: Distributive Justice is positively related PSM levels of public university employees.

H₂: Affective Commitment mediates the relationship between PSM and DJ, such that, in case of higher AC there will be a strong positive relationship between PSM and DJ and vice versa.

4. Research Methods (*sample and data*)

A descriptive research design was used aiming at determining how perceived DJ of the PA affects PSM of public universities in Sierra Leone. The population of interest was 500 employees that consisted of faculty/administrative members working in Public Sector Universities of Sierra Leone. Mugenda, O & Mugenda, B (2003) explain that the target population should have some observable characteristics, to which the researcher intended to generalize the results of the study. Primary data has been collected through questionnaires. The sampling method used in this research was Simple Random Sampling. The results of the questionnaire were discussed to identify what kind of relationship that exists among the variables and which factor contributes the most towards PSM in these institutions so as to increase reliability of current research in depth.

Model (*model specification*)

Multiple linear regression Analysis is used to determine the nature and degree of linear relationship between two sets of data. The degree of positive or negative correlation between the multivariate data can then be determined by estimating the Coefficient. We have therefore used a multiple linear regression model to determine how much the independent variables (DJ) can influence the dependent variable (PSM). Multiple linear regression models were used to assess whether PSM is a function of the variables indicated on the conceptual framework. It provided information on impact of an independent variable while simultaneously controlling the effects of the mediating variable. Thus in modeling the relationship between the independent variable (perceived DJ denoted as X) of the PA and the dependent variable (PSM denoted as Y) we established that:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X + \varepsilon_{y1} \quad (1)$$

Deriving the relationship between the dependent variable and the mediating variables we have:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2Z + \varepsilon_{y2} \quad (2)$$

Similarly, developing the relationship between the dependent variable and the mediating variable and the effect of the mediating variable on the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable we posit that:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3X + \beta_4Z + \beta_5X Z + \varepsilon_{y3} \quad (3)$$

Equation 1 was established to test the first hypothesis of the study variables whilst equation 2 and 3 were established to test the second hypothesis. β_0 is a slope coefficient and β_1 - β_5 are coefficients parameter estimates of the models and ε is an error term.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Results

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The theories used for the questions and answer options are presented in the literature review. In the following sub divisions the relevant theories are further rationalized and the reasons why these questions are presented are justified. This section will also include the research findings including the presentation of the answers given to the questionnaire. The general method used to solicit information from the respondents was presented in the methodology. The aim of the questions presented in this section was to find out how Perceived DJ of the PA affects PSM of Public Universities in Sierra Leone followed by a regression model that shows how much the independent and the mediating variables may influence the dependent variable.

However, before carrying out the hypothesis testing, we accomplished groundwork scrutiny of the data set to verify for the violations of the underlying assumptions of residual normality, heteroscedasticity, linearity and multicollinearity. The residual test analysis does not show any severe violation of the assumptions. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 was used to analyze the construct validity and reliability and consequently test the research hypotheses.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section gives the background characteristics of respondents that participated in the survey, the gender distribution of respondents that participated in the study, age, education, period worked in the public universities, departments, designation, marital status and province were looked at. Most of these aspects are believed to relate to the variables of the study hence can affect employee motivation at public universities in Pakistan. A breakdown of this information is presented in table 1 below:

Table 1; Demographic characteristic of employees at the public universities

<i>Gender (%)</i>	<i>Work experience (%)</i>	<i>Marital status (%)</i>
Male = 75.2	≤ 5 = 33.0	Single = 27.5
Female = 24.8	6-10 = 32.1	Married = 71.6
<i>Age (%)</i>	11-15 = 19.3	Divorced = 0.0
< 30 = 22.0	> 15 = 15.6	Widowed = 0.9
31-40 = 55.1	<i>Department (%)</i>	<i>Universities (%)</i>
41-50 = 15.6	Social Sciences = 49.5	FBC = 14.7
> 50 = 7.3	Pure Sciences = 27.5	IPAM = 62.4
<i>Education (%)</i>	Administration = 9.2	NJALA = 8.2
Graduate = 1.8	Others = 13.8	EBK = 10.1
Post graduate = 50.2	<i>Designation (%)</i>	MMCET = 4.6
PhD = 44.1	Lecturer = 48.6	
Post Doc. = 3.9	Admin Staffs = 51.4	

Source: Authors

As can be seen in table 1, the demographic characteristics of respondents in this study are illustrated. The final sample comprised of 320 respondents (male 75.2 percent, female 24.8 percent). In terms of age structure, a good number of the respondents were aged between 31 to 40 years (55.1 percent). A huge number of respondents had a Post graduate degree (50.2 percent),

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followed by PhD degree (44.1 percent). Approximately 33 percent of the respondents had worked for a period of 0 to 5 years followed by 32.1 percent of those who had worked for a period of 6 to 10 years. A large number of the respondents were lecturers (48.6 percent) followed by assistant professors (30.3 percent). Most of the respondents were in the field of social sciences (49.5 percent). The largest groups of respondents were married (71.6 percent). Finally, respondents who came from IPAM (62.4 percent) were in majority.

5.2 Analysis

The element of analysis of this research was professional excellence of faculty/administrative members working in Public Sector Universities of Sierra Leone. Out of the 500 questionnaires administered by the researchers, 320 completely filled questionnaires were collected translating to 64% response rate. According to Babbie (2002), any response of 50% and above is adequate for analysis and therefore, the response rate of 64% is adequate. Hence, the data collected can be evaluated using inferential statistics (Sekaran, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The 64 % respondents responded to all items in the questionnaire for the main measures of the research using 7-point Likert-type scales between the range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We calculated an overall score for a measure by averaging ratings on items for the measure. The higher the score on a measure, the higher would be the level of the variable being measured. Perceived DJ was measured with five items and AC with 5 items that were sourced from Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) OJ Scale. The perceived DJ scale ($\alpha = .88$) evaluated employees' perceptions about the fairness of their reward system. The PSM scale ($\alpha = .91$) evaluated the degree of employees' perceptions about their job satisfaction. Finally, we evaluated AC using a modified version of the affective OC subscale that was put forward by Meyer, et al. (1993). We selected five items from the original measure, but we used only four items ($\alpha = .89$) because one item had a quite weak loading on the anticipated factor in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) established by Meyer et al. the test item is "I do not feel "emotionally attached" to the Institution."

In summary, the Kaiser- Mayer-Olkin Test (KMO), which measures sampling adequacy, was done for each variable and the results showed acceptability. In particular, the results of these statistical analyses showed that; (1) all the study variables exceeded the minimum standard of the KMO value of 0.6 and were significant in Bartlett's test of sphericity, (2) the items for each of the study variable exceeded factor loadings of 0.50 (Hair et al., 1998), and (3) all the study variables exceeded the acceptable standard of reliability analysis of 0.70 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994 as cited in Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The statistical results confirmed the measurement scale of this research met the acceptable standard of reliability and validity analyses as given in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2; Results of validity and reliability analysis

Variables	No of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	Factor Loading	Variance explained
PSM	5	.91	.87	.69 to .84	73.78
DJ	5	.88	.81	.75 to .89	68.5
AC	4	.89	.84	.82 to .91	77.44

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Table 3; Results of item validity (Principal Component Analysis)

Variable	Item	Component		
		1	2	3
PSM	I am interested in making public programs that are beneficial for my country or the community I belong to.	.86		
	Sharing my views on public policies with others is attractive to me.	.81		
	Meaningful public service is very important to me.	.92		
	Seeing people get benefits from the public program I have been deeply involved in brings me a great deal of satisfaction.	.87		
	I unselfishly contribute to my community.	.83		
DJ	My work schedule is fair		.75	
	I think that my level of pay is fair		.87	
	Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair		.85	
	I feel that my job responsibilities are fair		.89	
	Overall, employees have been treated regarding career advancement is fair		.76	
AC	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with the Institution.			.82
	I really feel as if the Institution's problems are my own.			.90
	I feel a strong sense of "belonging" to the Institution.			.91
	The Institution has a great deal of personal meaning for me			.89

Source: Authors computation from SPSS

5.3 Test of Hypothesis

Table 4 below illustrates the results of descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis for the study variables. The table shows that the mean values for the variables are from 4.86 to 5.55, suggesting that the levels of PSM, as well as the levels of perceived DJ and AC are ranging between these echelons. The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., PSM) and the independent variable (i.e., DJ), and the relationship between the mediating variable (i.e., AC) and the dependent variable (i.e., PSM) were less than 0.90, which signifies that the data was not affected by any severe problem of collinearity (Hair et al., 2005).

Participants in the research reported a mean level of PSM of 5.55 (6 is the midpoint on the 7-point Likert-type scale used). Bivariate correlations of the predictor variables with PSM were statistically significant and in the hypothesized direction. As illustrated in Table 4, DJ was positively related to PSM ($r = .26, p < .01$). Thus, the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) was supported by the study.

Table 4; Descriptive statistics and correlation results for the study variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Pearson correlation analysis		
			1	2	3
1 PSM	5.55	1.40	(1)		
2 DJ	4.86	1.32	.26**	(1)	
3 AC	5.36	1.38	.48**	.55**	(1)

Note: N = 320, Significant level: $p < 0.01^{**}$ (2-tailed).

Source: Authors computation from SPSS

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As illustrated in table 5 (EQ1), perceived DJ was positively related to PSM ($\beta = .26, p < 0.01$), thus reconfirming the acceptance of Hypothesis1. This result shows that prior to the inclusion of AC in equation 3, perceived DJ was significantly correlated with PSM. In addendum to that, the strength of the relationship between perceived DJ and PSM established earlier in EQ1 ($\beta = .26, p < 0.01$) was reduced but statistically significant with the inclusion of AC in EQ3 ($\beta = .21, P < 0.01$), Thus providing evidence for the acceptance of the second hypothesis of the study. However, in terms of explanatory power, prior to the incorporation of AC in EQ3, EQ1 had explained 7 percent of the variance in PSM. After the inclusion of AC in EQ3, the previous significant DJ reduced to ($\beta = .21, P < 0.01$) but the initial significant of AC in EQ2 ($\beta = .48, p < 0.001$) remained significant in EQ3 ($\beta = .49, p < 0.001$) and the strength of relationship between them was increased. With regards explanatory power, the incorporation of AC in EQ3 had explained 23 percent of the variation of PSM ($\beta = .53, p < 0.001$). This result further confirms the mediating effect of AC between PSM and DJ.

Table 5; Result of regression analysis

Variable	Dependent variable (public service motivation)		
	EQ1	EQ2	EQ3
Independent variable			
Constant	4.21***	.....	.....
DJ	.260**	.....	.....
Mediating variable			
Constant	.....	2.93***	.....
AC	.....	.48***	.....
Independent & mediating variables			
Constant	.....	.....	2.95***
DJ	.....	.....	.21**
AC	.....	.....	.49***
DJ* AC	.....	.....	.53***
F	7.75**	32.39***	16.05***
R ²	.07	.23	.23
Adj. R ²	.06	.22	.22
ΔR^2	.07	.23	.23

Note: N = 320, Significance at **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001
Source: Authors computation from SPSS

5.4 Discussion and implications

The study examined how perceived DJ of the PA affects PSM of employees at public universities in Pakistan and in the process explores the mediating role of AC between the two. This is important because when employees have little or no concern in the value and purpose of the PA, then the appraisal system will not be effective. The way to create its effectiveness and getting employees support is build upon the credence of enhancing the perceptions of employees of the usefulness of the appraisal process and its importance in building their career development. The study underscored the importance of perceived DJ in influencing employees' motivation. The finding show that large number of the employees perceived DJ as fair and

consequently may lead to an increase in their level of motivation. This finding is in line with theories and also in conformity with previous empirical studies (see for e.g. Greenberg, 2011) who found that DJ increases employees' affective reactions to work. See also Leventhal (1976) found DJ influenced extrinsic work motivation. However, the mediating role of AC had shown a stronger positive contribution to PSM as reported in table 5. This result confirms that AC plays an important role as a mediating variable in the motivation models of the public sector sample. Thus the findings draw attention to the relevance of AC in the absence of perceived DJ. An important policy implication emerging from this study is that public administrators should not underestimate the power of AC in influencing employees' motivation in an institution.

5.5 Concluding remarks and further research directions

The research contributes to PSM and DJ literature by exploring the relationship between perceived DJ and PSM in the context of Pakistan. Theories and literatures were reviewed to develop a suitable model for PSM and the model was developed based on PA justice research literatures that are mostly focused in the US setting.

The reliability and validity measurement scales were used to measure the relationship between DJ and PSM, and the mediating effect of AC in the model. Results of testing the model using a correlation and regression analysis discovered two important findings: first, DJ has a direct positive relationship with PSM which is in support of hypothesis (H₁) of the study. Second, AC mediated the effect of DJ on PSM, and very interestingly, the mediating effect increased the effect DJ had on PSM, therefore hypothesis (H₂) was also supported. However, In a Statistical view point, the findings confirm that increasing the role played by AC to employees will strongly invoke employees' perceptions of DJ, and this perception may lead to increased positive PSM. This empirical result is also somewhat consistent and has supported and expanded OJ research literature mostly published in US settings.

This paper has some limitations as in every study. First and foremost, the research made up of 320 staffs working at public universities in Sierra Leone, the sample might not be adequate for generalization. Secondly, the justice perceptions of the employees are sensitive to location. That means, surveys with the same sample in different locations may result in different outcomes. It is suggested that further researchers take the current constraints into consideration and use different measurement scales to measure the connection between the perceptions of justice and employee's motivation. Moreover, these three variables must be examined from the view point of other variables such as moderating role of PJ, IJ, leadership, personality, management styles, organizational culture and the demographic characteristics of the employees along with the research in different public and private sectors including private universities, entertainment, manufacturing, health etc, to contribute to the existing literature.

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