

REVISITING THE JUSTICE–DEVIANCE RELATIONSHIP: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION WITHIN THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACTS

This study investigates the relationships among procedural justice, distributive justice, job satisfaction, and deviant behavior within the framework of social exchange theory. Using data collected from 150 employees working in pest control company located in West Java, Indonesia, this research applies Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the justice–deviance relationship. The findings reveal that both procedural and distributive justice have a positive influence on job satisfaction, indicating that employees who perceive fairness in decision-making and outcome distribution tend to experience greater satisfaction in their work. Procedural justice is also found to reduce deviant behavior directly, while distributive justice does not show a significant direct effect on such behavior. More importantly, job satisfaction functions as a key mediating mechanism that channels the effects of justice perceptions toward reducing deviant acts. These results reinforce the assumptions of social exchange theory, suggesting that employees reciprocate fair treatment with positive attitudes and diminished negative behaviors. Theoretically, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how fairness perceptions shape behavioral outcomes through affective processes. Practically, it emphasizes that fostering procedural and distributive fairness can enhance job satisfaction and minimize deviant behavior, which is particularly relevant for service-based industries in West Java—such as pest control—that rely heavily on employee integrity and cooperation.

Key words: procedural justice; distributive justice; job satisfaction; deviant behavior; social exchange theory

INTRODUCTION

Organizational justice has long been recognized as a critical determinant of employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. It encompasses the perceived fairness of procedures, outcomes, and interpersonal interactions that shape how individuals evaluate their organization and leaders (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Procedural justice captures employees' perceptions of fairness in decision making processes and organizational policies, whereas distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes such as pay, recognition, and workload allocation (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Greenberg, 1990). Together, these dimensions shape how employees evaluate their treatment within the organization.

Within the framework of social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), justice perceptions play a central role in predicting workplace behavior. SET posits that employees respond to fair treatment with positive attitudes and cooperative conduct. In contrast, perceived injustice often prompts retaliation, withdrawal, or other forms of deviant workplace behavior (Berry et al., 2007; Robinson & Bennett, 2024).

Workplace deviance refers to voluntary behavior that violates organizational norms and harms the organization or its members (Lee & Allen, 2002; Tufan et al., 2023). Scholars and practitioners continue to treat this phenomenon as a critical issue because such behaviors undermine performance, erode trust, and weaken organizational effectiveness.

Recent research indicates that employees often engage in deviant behavior as a response to perceived unfair treatment. Biased decision making, inequitable reward distribution, and inconsistent supervision frequently trigger negative reactions that manifest in counterproductive or harmful workplace actions (Meng et al., 2024). However, the mechanisms linking justice perceptions to deviant acts are not purely cognitive but also emotional and motivational. Job satisfaction, in particular, has been identified as a key affective mediator that explains how fairness influences employee behavior (Ilyas Chaudhary et al., 2022; Mackey et al., 2019). When employees feel satisfied with their work and perceive fair treatment, they are less likely to express frustration or resentment through counterproductive actions.

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain. First, many studies examine the direct effects of procedural and distributive justice on deviant behavior but do not adequately consider job satisfaction as a mediating

mechanism (Astuti et al., 2020). Second, findings remain inconsistent regarding which justice dimension more strongly predicts behavioral outcomes (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015). Third, limited evidence exists from specific service sectors such as pest control. Because employees in this industry often work independently at client sites, fairness perceptions and job satisfaction may strongly influence ethical conduct and service quality. Examining the justice–deviance relationship in this context therefore holds both theoretical and practical importance.

Grounded in social exchange theory, this study aims to revisit the relationship between organizational justice and deviant behavior by emphasizing the mediating role of job satisfaction. Specifically, it investigates (1) the effects of procedural and distributive justice on job satisfaction; (2) the direct and indirect influences of these justice dimensions on deviant behavior; and (3) the extent to which job satisfaction serves as a mediator within the justice–deviance framework. Data were collected from 150 employees working in a pest control company, providing a relevant empirical context where fairness and satisfaction directly influence ethical and performance-related outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature in two key ways. Theoretically, it enriches the understanding of affective mechanisms underlying the justice–deviance relationship and extends social exchange theory to a new occupational context. Practically, it highlights the importance of procedural and distributive fairness as strategic levers to enhance job satisfaction and reduce deviant behaviors, especially in service-oriented industries that depend on employee integrity and professionalism.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to test the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between procedural justice, distributive justice, and deviant behavior within the framework of social exchange theory. The design enabled the study to examine causal relationships among variables through statistical hypothesis testing. The research applied a cross sectional survey approach and collected data from employees of a pest control company operating in Indonesia. The analysis utilized Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares estimation to assess both the direct and indirect relationships among the constructs.

The population of this research consisted of all employees working in the selected pest control company. Using a purposive sampling technique, respondents were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) they had been employed in the company for at least one year, ensuring familiarity with organizational justice practices; and (2) they were permanent employees.

A total of 150 respondents participated in this study, representing various job positions including field operators, administrative staff, and supervisors. The majority of respondents were male, with an average age of 28 years and a work tenure of approximately five years. This demographic composition provided a comprehensive view of justice perceptions and behavioral outcomes across different hierarchical levels within the organization.

Measurement Instruments

All constructs in the model were measured using established and validated scales from previous studies, adapted to the Indonesian context. A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used for all items.

Procedural Justice was measured using six items adapted from (Colquitt, 2001), assessing fairness in decision-making processes, consistency, and employee voice in procedures.

Distributive Justice was measured with five items also adapted from (Colquitt, 2001), focusing on fairness in outcome distribution such as pay, recognition, and workload.

Job Satisfaction was measured using the four-item scale developed by (Thompson & Phua, 2012), reflecting job satisfaction with work and job conditions.

Deviance Behavior was assessed using the 7-item scale by (Bennett & Robinson, 2000), capturing interpersonal deviance behaviors.

All instruments were pre-tested through a pilot study involving 30 employees from a similar organization to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and reliability of items.

Reliability and Validity Testing

The study assessed reliability and validity through outer model evaluation in SEM-PLS. It examined internal consistency using composite reliability and assessed convergent validity through average variance extracted. To establish discriminant validity, it verified that the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the correlations between constructs. The results show that all measurement items satisfied the recommended thresholds, confirming that the constructs demonstrate adequate reliability and validity for subsequent structural analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

The study analyzed the data using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS software. The researchers selected PLS-SEM because it accommodates complex structural models and performs well with small to medium sample sizes.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement model evaluation assessed the reliability and validity of the indicators by examining indicator loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. Second, the structural model evaluation tested the hypothesized relationships among procedural justice, distributive justice, job satisfaction, and deviant behavior.

To examine the mediating role of job satisfaction, the study applied a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples to determine the significance of indirect effects. The researchers also evaluated the coefficient of determination and predictive relevance to assess the model’s explanatory power and predictive capability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model Assessment

Before testing the structural relationships, the reliability and validity of all constructs were evaluated using the outer model in SmartPLS. The results showed that all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good indicator reliability.

The composite reliability (CR) values ranged between 0.89 and 0.95, exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.63 to 0.73, suggesting adequate convergent validity, as each construct explained more than 50% of its indicators’ variance.

The study assessed discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio. The square root of the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the correlations between constructs, and all HTMT values remained below 0.85. These results confirm that each construct demonstrates clear empirical distinction from the others.

Accordingly, the measurement model satisfies the required reliability and validity standards and is appropriate for subsequent structural analysis.

Structural Model Assessment

The inner model analysis was conducted to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among procedural justice, distributive justice, job satisfaction, and deviance behavior. The model exhibited acceptable predictive power, with $R^2 = 0.56$ for job satisfaction and $R^2 = 0.48$ for deviance behavior. These values indicate that procedural and distributive justice explained 56% of the variance in job satisfaction, and that the overall model explained 48% of the variance in deviance behavior.

The Goodness of Fit (GoF) index value of 0.41 indicated that the model had a strong overall fit, while the Q^2 value of 0.39 demonstrated adequate predictive relevance.

The results of the path coefficient analysis are summarized as follows:

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Procedural Justice → Job Satisfaction	0.496	10.179	0.000	Supported
H2	Distributive Justice → Job Satisfaction	0.469	10.167	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Satisfaction → Deviance Behavior	-0.584	7.578	0.000	Supported
H4	Procedural Justice → Deviance Behavior	-0.214	3.067	0.001	Supported
H5	Distributive Justice → Deviance Behavior	0.063	0.966	0.334	Not Supported
H6	Procedural Justice → Job Satisfaction → Deviance Behavior	-0.290	6.662	0.000	Supported (Mediation)
H7	Distributive Justice → Job Satisfaction → Deviance Behavior	-0.274	5.636	0.000	Supported (Mediation)

Source: Authors’ data processing results

The findings from the structural model analysis reveal important insights into how justice perceptions influence job satisfaction and deviant behavior within the workplace.

Procedural Justice and Job Satisfaction (H1).

Procedural justice showed a strong positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.496$, $t = 10.179$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that when employees perceive fairness in organizational procedures—such as transparent communication, consistent decision-making, and opportunities to voice opinions—they experience greater satisfaction with their jobs. This finding aligns with prior studies (Colquitt, 2001; Loi et al., 2009), emphasizing that procedural fairness fosters trust, respect, and emotional commitment toward the organization.

Distributive Justice and Job Satisfaction (H2).

Similarly, distributive justice significantly and positively affects job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.469$, $t = 10.167$, $p < 0.001$). This supports Adams' Equity Theory (Adams & Freedman, 1976), suggesting that when employees perceive fair outcomes—such as equitable pay, recognition, and workload—they feel more valued and satisfied. Consistent with (Cropanzano et al., 2017), equitable reward systems enhance morale and reinforce perceptions of fairness.

Job Satisfaction and Deviance Behavior (H3).

Job satisfaction was found to have a strong negative and significant relationship with deviance behavior ($\beta = -0.584$, $t = 7.578$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that satisfied employees are less likely to engage in counterproductive or norm-violating behaviors. The result supports the social exchange framework (Blau, 1964), where fair and satisfying experiences are reciprocated with positive work conduct and loyalty.

Procedural Justice and Deviance Behavior (H4).

The direct path between procedural justice and deviance behavior was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.214$, $t = 3.067$, $p = 0.001$). This means fair and consistent procedures effectively discourage deviant actions. When employees perceive procedural fairness, they tend to trust organizational intentions and refrain from retaliatory behaviors (Colquitt & Zipay, 2015; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Distributive Justice and Deviance Behavior (H5).

Conversely, distributive justice did not significantly influence deviance behavior ($\beta = 0.063$, $t = 0.966$, $p = 0.334$). This suggests that fairness in outcomes alone is insufficient to shape behavioral compliance. In collectivist settings, procedural and relational fairness appear more influential than material equality. Employees may accept unequal outcomes if decision-making processes are perceived as fair and respectful.

Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction (H6 & H7).

Job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationships between both types of justice and deviance behavior. The indirect effect of procedural justice ($\beta = -0.290$, $t = 6.662$, $p < 0.001$) and distributive justice ($\beta = -0.274$, $t = 5.636$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that fairness enhances satisfaction, which in turn suppresses deviant tendencies. This supports partial mediation and reinforces the social exchange perspective—fair treatment fosters positive affective states, encouraging reciprocal, pro-organizational behavior and reducing deviance.

Overall, the findings indicate that procedural justice exerts a more consistent and stronger influence on job satisfaction and the reduction of workplace deviance than distributive justice. Fair and transparent decision making processes appear to shape employee attitudes and behavioral responses more effectively than outcome distribution alone. These results suggest that organizations should prioritize transparent, consistent, and participative procedures to foster employee satisfaction and discourage norm violating behavior. By strengthening procedural fairness, organizations can cultivate a more committed, responsible, and compliant workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence on the complex relationships among procedural justice, distributive justice, job satisfaction, and deviant behavior within the framework of social exchange theory. The results highlight that fairness in both procedures and outcomes plays a crucial role in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in service-oriented settings such as the pest control industry.

First, procedural justice shows a strong positive effect on job satisfaction. Transparent communication, consistent decision making, and meaningful employee participation strengthen perceptions of respect and trust. These fair processes not only enhance satisfaction but also directly reduce deviant behavior. When employees perceive fairness in organizational procedures, they show lower tendencies to retaliate or engage in counterproductive actions.

Second, distributive justice also positively influences job satisfaction, confirming that equitable reward allocation fosters fairness perceptions and reinforces morale. However, its direct effect on deviant behavior is not significant, which suggests that material equity alone does not fully determine behavioral compliance. In collectivist organizational settings, employees appear to place greater weight on relational and procedural fairness than on outcome based distribution.

Third, job satisfaction functions as a central mediating mechanism that links justice perceptions to behavioral outcomes. When employees experience satisfaction derived from fair treatment, they become less inclined to violate organizational norms. This finding aligns with social exchange theory, which posits that fair and respectful treatment generates positive reciprocal responses from employees.

Overall, the findings underscore that procedural fairness exerts a more consistent influence on employee satisfaction and behavior than distributive fairness. From a managerial standpoint, organizations should emphasize

fairness in processes—such as participatory decision-making, transparent communication, and consistent policy enforcement—as these practices cultivate satisfaction and significantly reduce workplace deviance.

In conclusion, fairness functions not only as a moral responsibility but also as a strategic organizational asset. When companies strengthen procedural and distributive justice, they enhance job satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of deviant behavior. By institutionalizing fair processes and equitable outcomes, organizations can cultivate a more ethical, cooperative, and stable work environment that supports long term performance.

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