

Mediating Effects of Organizational Trust and HR Policies on the Relationship between Organizational Justice and Work Satisfaction in View of the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Empirical Study on the Perception of IT Employees in India

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Abstract

Information Technology (IT) industry is a significant contributor to the GDP of India. However, the IT industry witnesses burgeoning dissatisfaction among employees and the subsequent mass attrition, which in turn affects organizational productivity. The pandemic of Covid-19 worsens the situation further. A majority of companies have reduced salaries, rewards, and other such expenses to decrease their losses. Such measures upset employees' trust in their organizations, causing dissatisfaction and lack of work engagement. Such situations require strategies to satisfy employees and maintain organizational productivity. In this backdrop, the present paper has examined the impact of organizational justice on work satisfaction and the roles of HR practices and organizational trust on the relation between organizational justice and employee satisfaction in the context of IT organizations and the pandemic situation. The study has shed light on the importance of maintaining trust among employees and developing policies to impress employees about organizational fairness during the pandemic. The required data were gathered from a randomly selected 403 IT employees in India. Data analysis demonstrated full mediation of both organizational trust and HR on the relationship between organizational justice and work satisfaction of employees during the pandemic.

Keywords: Organizational justice, Organizational trust, HR policies, Work satisfaction, IT industry, Covid-19

1 Introduction

Happy and satisfied employees create and facilitate a productive workplace, which in turn improves organizational performance. However, employees' satisfaction depends on the innate culture & work environment of the organization. The work environment should be conducive, communicative, and informative. This is precisely valid in the Indian IT industry as the vast majority of IT organizations perform dismally in adopting and practicing a culture that helps to create, share, and distribute knowledge within the organization (Pillania, 2006). Moreover, in adequate policies of reward and recognition have been identified in such organizations. The rigid hierarchy culture rooted from the conservative society makes the organizational atmosphere unpleasant for employees. Such a work atmosphere causes job dissatisfaction among employees and compels them to leave their jobs. Covid-19 degrades this condition much worse. The pandemic has challenged both employees as well as organizations. The pandemic has halted the entire world and business across the globe has hit the bottom. Such a scenario specifically affects Indian IT organizations, which gains its businesses from foreign nations. Organizations have been forced to

change their work culture and work patterns. Organizations initiated steps to modify the existing

policies and practices. The most of work places have been closed, and working from home has become the new normal. Along with this, most of the companies devised strategies to cut expenses by reducing salaries and negating rewards. Consequently, employees get upset and assume that organizations do not express empathy in difficult situations. Such feelings affect their trust towards organizations and leads to the lack of commitment and engagement in their work due to job dissatisfaction. This affects organizational productivity and demands the development of strategies to satisfy employees.

The role of organizational justice factors in making employees happy has been actively studied for more than three decades. One of the prominent studies was carried out by Greenberg (1986), who reported that unfair treatment by organizations results in lower levels of employees' cooperation, which in turn reduces the quality of teamwork. However, the author failed to highlight the factors that determined the fairness of employees' treatment. Crospazano et al.(1995) highlighted the necessity of practicing fair treatment by organizations. The authors pointed out that fairness related to hiring, reward systems, performance appraisal, etc., helped in improving employees' perceptions about their organizations. A study by Sitkin and Bies(1994) indicated a practical shortcoming in the development of existing policies for providing justice to employees. The authors argued that organizations trusted the development of policies to eliminate in justice and aid decision making; meanwhile, these organizations did not verify whether such policies were accepted by employees as a means of providing justice to them. Harlos and Pinder (2000) hinted that the employees' beliefs about unfair organizational treatment can result in anger, isolation, and distress. However, the researchers failed to point out the impact of such emotional reactions of employees. Further, the study did not explain the factors that determine the fairness of treatment. Ambrose and Schminke (2003) clarified the determining factors of fairness. According to the authors, policies play a key role in measuring the fairness of treatment. However, the study did not ascertain whether assessment of fairness through policies would result in job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Saks (2006) established that procedural justice significantly influenced job satisfaction. However, a small sample size and cross-sectional nature restricted the scope of the study. Again, Jahangiretal. (2006) illustrated that the level of job satisfaction declined in association with the increase of procedural injustice. Lack of clarity regarding the impact of other justice factors restricted the generalizability of the study. This drawback was eliminated by Al-Zubi (2010) who demonstrated the significant impact of three justice factors on employees' satisfaction. Further, Elaminand Alomaim (2011) illustrated the significant effect of justice dimensions on employee satisfaction. Similarly, studies of Tessema et al. (2014) and Dajani (2015) indicated the positive and significant relationship between organizational justice dimensions and employee satisfaction. However, the limited study universe and the omission of roles of factors, such as HR practices and policies, restricted the scope of these findings. Additionally, Hao et al. (2016) established that perceptions about the relationship between justice dimensions and employee satisfaction varied between full time employees and part time employees, thereby demanding further studies to prove the relation.

A limited number of studies have explored the manner in which the Covid-19 pandemic affects the business of organizations and employer-employee relationship. Correla and Almeida (2020) indicated that policies that assure procedural justice negatively affect the turn over intentions of nurses and physicians during the Covid-19 situation in Portugese hospitals. Rahmanand Arif (2020) reported that justice parameters, such as work flexibility, significantly influenced job satisfaction of work-from-home employees during the pandemic. However, this study did not examine the roles of rewards and other income-related policies and the communication between employees and

supervisors in determining job satisfaction. Thanh et al. (2021) illustrated the mediating role of Covid-19 related organizational responses in establishing the relationship between perceived health risks and job performance. Moreover, Ratnayake (2021) demonstrated that procedural justice mediated the relationship between HR policies and employee satisfaction. Thus, a dearth of studies is found on the relationship between organizational justice dimensions and employee satisfaction in Indian IT organizations during Covid-19. Moreover, the roles of contextual factors, such as HR practices and organizational trust, in establishing the association between organizational justice and employee satisfaction were scarcely studied in the context of IT organizations and the pandemic situation. Above all, studies like Hao et al. (2016) demand further research to substantiate the association between justice dimensions and employee satisfaction.

The findings and gaps revealed by the previous studies triggered the researcher and hence the present study is carried out with the aim of investigating the impact of organizational justice on employee satisfaction in Indian IT organizations in the context of covid 19 pandemic. The study further explored the roles of HR policies and organizational trust in influencing the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction. A theoretical framework was designed for assessing the relationship between these study variables. The framework consists of organizational justice factors as independent variable and employee work satisfaction as dependent variable. Organizational justice was measured using the constructs like distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice and work satisfaction of the employees was measured using job security, sense of belonging, recognition and productivity. The framework also includes HR policies and organizational trust as mediating variables. The framework is depicted in figure 1.

2 Objectives

- To investigate the association between organizational justice and employee satisfaction in Indian IT organizations in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To explore the roles of HR practices and trust in influencing the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction.

Hypothesis

H1: Organizational justice significantly influences the satisfaction of employees in IT organizations.
 H2: HR policies and organizational trust significantly mediates the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction.

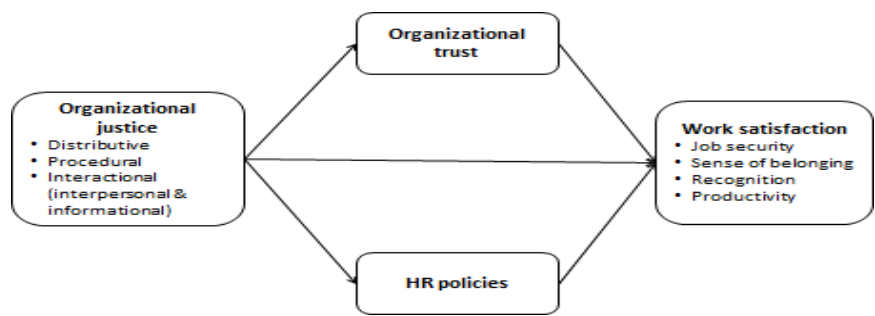


Figure1. Theoretical frame work

3 Materials and Methods

Sampling

The present study covers employees of IT organizations in Bengaluru as its target population. The study selected Indian IT industry with a large number of small and big organizations. Primary data was gathered through random sampling technique, which is a simplest and non-biased technique. A sample of 403 employees ranging from software developers to HR managers was selected and asked to fill a structured questionnaire to gather the required data. The data collected from the sample population was analyzed through multiple statistical tools, which is explained in the subsequent subsection.

Data analysis

The demographic information of the respondents was presented using frequency analysis.. Descriptive analysis was used to measure the perceptions of participants regarding the various dimensions of the study variables. Cronbach's alpha (α) was adopted to assess the internal consistency and reliability of scales used in the questionnaire. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses to analyze the impact of organizational justice on employees' satisfaction and to analyze the mediating roles of trust and HR policies in establishing the association between organizational justice and employee satisfaction.

4 Results

The demographic facts of the participants are presented in Table 1. It can be inferred that a majority of the participants were young female professionals (21 to 30 years), indicating the increase in female participation in the Indian IT industry. Further, it can be inferred that 78.5% of the respondents were graduates, with 51.9% being post-graduates and 26.9% being under-graduates. A majority of respondents had an experience of less than 5 years, which indicates that most of the new employees were highly educated. This finding is important because qualified, but inexperienced employees are concerned about job satisfaction and are likely to alter their work preferences. Moreover, a majority of respondents (95%) were either entry level or middle level employees, indicating that they were susceptible to HR policies. It was observed that a majority of respondents (82.2%) were forced to change their work functions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and most of the respondents (63.3%) worked in the late hours, thereby affecting their sleeping hours. In addition, most of the respondents had job insecurities because of Covid-19. This finding indicated that the pandemic affected the respondents' work habits and job security.

Table1 Demographic details

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	167	41.4
	Female	236	58.6
Age(years)	21-25	196	48.6
	26-30	118	29.3
	31-35	39	9.7
	36-40	20	5.0
	>40	30	7.4
Education	UG	107	26.6
	PG	209	51.9

TechnicalCourse/			
	Diploma		
	MBA	58	14.4
	Single	274	68.0
Maritalstatus	Married	119	29.5
	Others	10	2.5
	Entry-level	177	43.9
	Middle-level	206	51.1
Inwhichlevelofemploymentareyouworking atpresent?	Senior-level	20	5.0
	Softwareengineer	39	9.7
	Sr.Softwareengineer	9	2.2
	Teamleader	79	19.6
	Projectmanager	40	9.9
	HRassistant	49	12.2
Designation	HRmanager	20	5.0
	Technicalsupport	58	14.4
	Other	109	27.0
	<5 years	324	80.4
	6-10years	20	5.0
Totalexperience			

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percent
	11-15years	39	9.7
	16-20years	10	2.5
	>20 years	10	2.5
	<5 years	343	85.1
6-10years		40	9.9
Experienceinthecurrentorganization			
11-15years		10	2.5
	16-20years	10	2.5
Has the Covid-19 pandemic changed your work functions	Yes	333	82.6
	No	70	17.4
Do you feel insecure about your job due to the Covid-19 pandemic	Yes	245	60.8
	No	158	39.2
Are you required to do late sittings due to from home in the view of the current pandemic?	Yes work	255	63.3
	No	148	36.7
	1-2hrs	147	36.5
How many hours of sitting are required after the routine hours of job?	3-4 hrs	128	31.8
	5-6 hrs	69	17.1
	>6	59	14.6
	<5hrs	40	9.9
What is your daily sleep hour during the week days?	5-6 hrs	215	53.3
	7-8 hrs	88	21.8
	>8hrs	60	14.9
Total		403	100.0

Table 2 depicts that for all factors and subfactors, the values of Cronbach's Alpha were greater than 0.6. Hence, high internal consistency of items used in the study can be ascertained. The Cronbach's Alpha values of organizational justice during Covid-19 was found to be 0.954 (6 items) for its sub factor distributive justice, 0.921 (6 items) for procedural justice, 0.855 (6 items) for interactional justice, and 0.939 (6 items) for informational justice. The Cronbach's Alpha value for organizational trust was found to be 0.710 (7 items) and the Cronbach's Alpha value for HR management policies was found to be 0.924 (6 items). The Cronbach's Alpha Value for work satisfaction was found to be 0.776 (5 items) for job security, 0.863 (5 items) for sense of belonging, 0.915 (5 items) for recognition, and 0.907 (5 items) for productivity. Thus, it was established that all items of the questionnaire were internally consistent.

Table 2 Reliability statistics of the variables

Factors	Sub-factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Nof Items
Organizational Justice during Covid	Distributive Justice	0.956	6
	Procedural Justice	0.921	6
	Interactional Justice	0.855	6
	Informational Justice	0.939	5
Organizational Trust		0.710	7
Human Resource Management (HR M) policies		0.924	6
Work Satisfaction	Job Security	0.776	5
	Sense of belonging	0.863	5
	Recognition	0.915	5
	Productivity–Optimal Use of Skills	0.907	5

Figure 2 depicts the structural equation model (SEM), which was built to establish the inter-relationship among organizational justice, organizational trust, HR policies, and employee satisfaction. The model and the standardized path coefficients of models were studied by comparing various models on the basis of fit indices. The study's key purpose was to explore the association between employee satisfaction (the main outcome variable) and organizational justice (the independent variable). In this model, employee satisfaction was classified as an endogenous variable because it is a key variable that determines the outcome. The model was constructed around employee satisfaction, with organizational justice as the exogenous variable. The association between exogenous and endogenous constructs was measured by testing the structural model. The model explored the roles of organizational trust and HR policies as the mediators. The model was constructed by using sub constructs revealed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

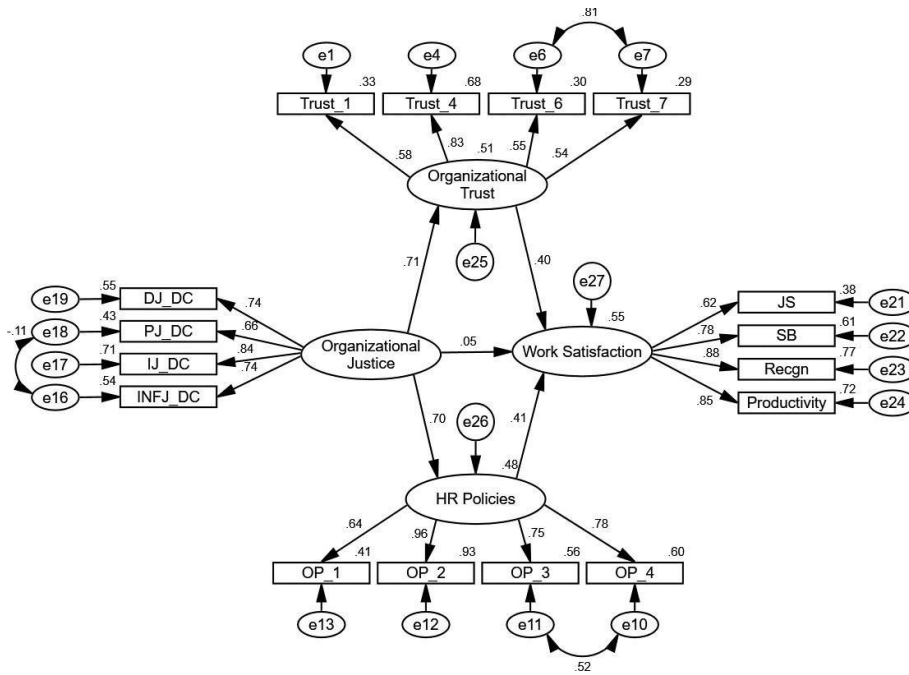


Figure2. Structural equation model for the study

Table 3 provides the goodness of fit of the prepared model. Chi-square value was used to measure the significant minimum fit of the model. According to Bollen and Long (1993) and Kelloway (1995), a chi-square value between 2 and 5 specifies a good model fit. It was observed that the chi-square value for the study model was 3.373, which specified a good fit of the structural model. In addition, the study used indices, such as Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Relative Fit Index (RFI), Incremental Fix Index (IFI), and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), to measure the fitness of the model. Table 3 depicts that NFI was 0.907, RFI was 0.924, IFI was 0.900, TLI was 0.908, and CFI was 0.901. Thus, the findings demonstrated that all these values were above the threshold value of 0.90. Additionally, RMSEA (0.074) was found to be within the acceptable limit of 0.08. This indicates that the suggested model was robust enough to measure the relationship among all proposed constructs, namely, organizational justice, employee satisfaction, HR practices, and organizational trust, with a good predictive accuracy. Further, the model was powerful in explaining the interrelationship among endogenous, exogenous, and latent factors, as well as their sub-constructs.

Table 3. Model Fit Indices

Model Fit Indices	Observed Value
Chi-square(CMIN/DF)	3.373
NormedFitIndex(NFI)	0.907
RelativeFitIndex(RFI)	0.924
IncrementalFitIndex (IFI)	0.900
TuckerLewisIndex(TLI)	0.908

ModelFitIndices	ObservedValue
ComparativeFitIndex(CFI)	0.901
RootMeanSquareErrorofApproximation(RMSEA)	.074

Table 4 shows the standardized structural path values attained from the model. It was inferred that the values of Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded 1.96 in most of the cases and were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Further, the findings illustrated that organizational justice exerted no significant impact on satisfaction of IT employees ($B = .049, p > 0.05$). This indicates that the dimensions of organizational justice including information, procedural and distributive justice failed to create any direct influence to satisfy the IT employees who were already upset by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, based on the above discussion, *H1: Organizational justice significantly influences the satisfaction of the employees in IT organization* was rejected.

Organizational justice significantly influences the satisfaction of the employees in IT organization was rejected.

Table 4. Standardised regression weights

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
HRPolicies	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.696	.058	11.993	***
	e				
OrganizationalTrust	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.712	.057	12.294	***
	e				
WorkSatisfaction	<--- OrganizationalTrust	.402	.060	4.541	***
WorkSatisfaction	<--- HRPolicies	.409	.046	5.860	***
WorkSatisfaction	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.049	.062	.517	.605
	e				
Trust_1	<--- OrganizationalTrust	.577	.071	10.220	***
Trust_4	<--- OrganizationalTrust	.826			
Trust_6	<--- OrganizationalTrust	.550	.096	9.770	***
Trust_7	<--- OrganizationalTrust	.537	.103	9.531	***
OrganizationalPolicy_4	<--- HRPolicies	.776			
OrganizationalPolicy_3	<--- HRPolicies	.750	.040	23.258	***
OrganizationalPolicy_2	<--- HRPolicies	.963	.062	19.397	***
OrganizationalPolicy_1	<--- HRPolicies	.642	.065	13.402	***
Informationjustice	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.737	.063	15.698	***
	e				
Interactionaljustice	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.845			
	e				
Proceduraljustice	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.659	.064	13.562	***
	e				
Distributivejustice	<--- OrganizationalJustice	.738	.061	16.079	***
	e				
Jobsecurity	<--- WorkSatisfaction	.619			
Senseofbelonging	<--- WorkSatisfaction	.782	.097	12.551	***

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Recognition	<---WorkSatisfaction	.875	.103	13.470	***
Productivity	<---WorkSatisfaction	.851	.111	13.260	***

***Significanceatp<0.000

Table 5 provides the mediating influence of organizational trust and HR policies on the relationship between organizational justice and employees' satisfaction. The standardized, direct, indirect, and total effects of organizational justice on employee satisfaction are presented in the table. Direct effects are the ones produced by one variable on another variable without any intervening variables. Indirect effects are the ones caused by one variable on another variable with one or more intervening variables. Total effect is the combination of direct effects and indirect effects. The findings illustrated a significant relationship between organizational justice and HR policies ($B=0.696, p<0.00$) and between HR policies and employee satisfaction ($B=0.409, p<0.00$). This indicates the indirect effect of organizational justice on employee satisfaction with the active mediation of HR policies. Further, it was observed that organizational justice did not exert any direct significant impact on employee satisfaction ($B=0.049, p>0.05$). Thus, it can be stated that HR policies fully mediate the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction. In other words, organizations should develop appropriate policies to retain positive relationship between employees and employers, maintain safety and health aspects, address employees' grievances, be fair and show sympathy to employees during the Covid-19 pandemic, and facilitate job satisfaction.

Similarly, Organizational justice and organizational trust ($B=0.712, p0.000$) and organizational trust and employee satisfaction ($B=0.402, p 0.000$) were shown to have a significant connection. There was no evidence of a direct link between organizational justice and job satisfaction. As a result, organizational trust may be said to fully moderate the link between organizational justice and employee job satisfaction. In other words, organizations should show integrity and fairness towards employees to ensure their trust and make them satisfied in their jobs. Based on these arguments, *H2: HR policies and organizational trust significantly mediates the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction*, was accepted.

Table5. Standardized Total, Direct and Indirect effects

	OrganizationalJus tice	HRPolicies	OrganizationalTr ust	WorkSatisfaction
TotalEffects				
HRPolicies	.696	.000	.000	.000
OrganizationalTrust	.712	.000	.000	.000
WorkSatisfaction	.620	.409	.402	.000

	Organizational Justice	HR Policies	Organizational Trust	Work Satisfaction
Direct Effects				
HR Policies	.696	.000	.000	.000
Organizational Trust	.712	.000	.000	.000
Work Satisfaction	.049	.409	.402	.000
Indirect Effects				
HR Policies	.000	.000	.000	.000
Organizational Trust	.000	.000	.000	.000
Work Satisfaction	.571	.000	.000	.000

5 Discussion

The paper investigated the roles of HR practices and organizational trust in influencing the relationship between organizational justice and employee satisfaction. The findings illustrated that none of the factors of organizational justice exerted any direct and significant impact on employees' work satisfaction during the pandemic. The results contradicted the studies of Al-Zubi (2010), Zainalipour et al. (2010), and Palaiologos et al. (2011), which showed the significant impact of the factors of organizational justice on employee satisfaction and indicated that the relationship among the above-mentioned variables varied with respect to various circumstances and industries. Further, the present study identified full mediation of organizational trust on the relationship between organizational justice and work satisfaction of employees. The findings of Aryee et al. (2002) of a partial mediating effect of trust on employees' satisfaction were partially supported and the findings of Ngeleshi and Dominic (2021) of the mediation of trust in the relationship between organizational justice and work satisfaction of employees were fully supported. The study highlighted that integrity and fairness of organizations towards employees helps to increase their trust, which in turn makes them satisfied in their job. This was partially supported by the study of Osborne and Hammoud (2017), which hinted the impact of rewards, empowerment, and strong bonds between supervisors and workers, on making employees engaged and satisfied. Moreover, the present study demonstrated the full mediation of HR policies on the relationship between organizational justice and work satisfaction of employees. The study highlighted those organizational policies formulated to retain positive relation between employee and employer, to assure safety and health of employees, and to handle grievances of employees, help to make employees satisfied in their work.

6 Conclusion

The paper empirically evaluated the impact of organizational justice on the work satisfaction of IT employees and the roles of organizational trust and HR policies on the relation between dependent variables and independent variables. The findings illustrated that no direct and significant impact was exerted by organizational justice on the satisfaction of IT employees. Furthermore, the study found that both the organizational trust and human resource policies fully mediate the link between organizational justice and employee job satisfaction during the Covid 19 epidemic. In other words, both HR policies and organizational trust of employees determine the impact of justice dimensions on employees' work satisfaction. In the wake of these findings, development of policies was suggested to retain a positive relation between employees and employers, to assure safety and health of employees, and to handle and address the employees grievances, in order to assure employees that companies are fair to them during the Covid-19 pandemic and render job

satisfaction. Further, the paper suggested the must-have for organizations to show integrity and fairness towards employees to gain their trust, which in turn makes them satisfied in their work.

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