

Secondary Public School Teachers' Perceptions about Organizational Justice

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to determine secondary public school teachers' perceptions about organizational justice and whether these perceptions differ across gender, age, seniority, branch, educational background, the number of students and the number of teachers. The participants of the study consisted of 222 secondary public school teachers selected from Kütahya province. The data were gathered through using the Organizational Justice Scale. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, t test and one way-ANOVA were used. According to the findings obtained from the study, the participants have positive perceptions about organizational justice at secondary schools. Their perceptions on differed according to age, seniority, and the number of students, whereas they did not across gender, branch, educational background, and the number of teachers.

Key Words

Organizational Justice, Public Secondary Schools, Teachers.

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Justice is one of the most important principles in organizational and social life. The principles of justice in a society help people identify their mutual and social responsibilities and rights and define who and why their society will reward (Stevens & Wood, 1995). The term justice generally includes treating the equal equally. For an organization, justice means giving employees their rights to the extent they contribute to their organizations and punishments to the extent they act contrary to rules (Başaran, 1985). According to the Adams' (1965) equity theory, individuals compare their own efforts and rewards that they earn with employees on a similar footing (Cited in: Greenberg, 1990, 1993; Patterson, Green & Cary, 2002; Roch & Shanock, 2006). If an individual perceives that the ratio of his own efforts to his benefits is the same as that of the like, he believes the requirement of justice or equality is met. If he thinks the ratio of his own efforts to his benefits is more or less than that of the like, he considers the case injustice (Yücel & Gülviren, 2007). If employees decide or perceive injustice, they could change their effort level, as well as developing different ways of behavior. The changes of effort levels generally cause them to display negative job-related behaviors, because their perceptions about organizational justice affect their job-related attitudes and organizational behaviors (Tansky, 1993; İşbaşı, 2000). In this context, organizational justice is the main factor which affects job satisfaction and organizational performance (Aydın & Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2008). Organizational justice studies, particularly over the last two decades, have shown that perceived justice at workplace affects employees' attitudes and behaviors (İşbaşı, 2000). Organizational justice is not something new but organizational justice studies in schools and in the field of education management are ignored and are very few in number (Hoy & Tarter, 2004).

Organizational Justice

Justice is an ethical and legal principle (Çalışlar, 1983 Cited in: Pehlivan-Aydın, 2002; Demirtaş & Güneş, 2002). The term organizational justice concerns the way employees perceive decisions and practices of managers (Witt, 1993) and their organizational justice perceptions or their job-related attitudes and behaviors (Eskew, 1993). Greenberg (1996) defined organizational justice as a term which expresses employees' perceptions about how equally they are treated in the organization and the way such perceptions affect results like organizational commitment and

job satisfaction. The organizational justice theory relates to employees' points of view about justice in job-related matters (Greenberg, 1990). In this sense, organizational justice deals with what factors play a role in creating employees' job-related conclusion of justice/injustice and future results of such a conclusion (Şahin, 2007). In other words, organizational justice is concerned with the rules developed to distribute or to take decisions on distribution of acquisitions such as tasks, goods, services, rewards, punishments, wages, organizational positions, opportunities and roles among employees and societal norms that constitute the basis for these rules (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998).

In early studies, organizational justice was analyzed under two categories as distributive justice and procedural justice (Greenberg, 1996; Frey, 1997; Roch & Shanock, 2006). In later research (Bies & Moag, 1986 Cited in: Eskew, 1993), interactional justice was also considered. Although there are various justice typologies in the organizational justice literature, there is no theoretical framework to cover all justice types (Roch & Shanock, 2006). In the present study, distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice as three dimensions of organizational justice are briefly mentioned. However, the study attempts to examine organizational justice as a whole, instead of treating them as independent dimensions, as this is the latest trend over the last years.

Distributive justice relates to the justice of results (Jawahar, 2002). Distributive justice is related to employees' perceptions of justice while sharing organizational sources, expenses, promotions, or shares (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Distributive justice is arguments on status, seniority, production, effort, needs, and the determination of payment." In his explanation, Organ suggested three rules of distribution. These rules are justice, equity and needs which can also be seen as the dimensions of distributive justice (Koopmann, 2002). *Procedural justice* relates to the justice of procedures (Jawahar, 2002). According to Konovsky (2000) procedural justice is related to how distributive decisions are made as well as subjective and objective cases. The term procedural justice shows assessing what is right and what is wrong about procedures or methods during decision-making (Cropanzano, 1993; Greenberg, 1996). Employees who have a sense of equity regarding the method tend to perceive the distribution of rewards and punishments as fair (Greenberg, 1987; Folger & Konovsky, 1989). According to Organ (1988), the criteria used for making decisions regarding organizational practices

are related to that type of justice. Bies and Moag (1986) defined *interactional justice* as being related to the quality of the way behaviors of decision-makers is perceived. Interactional justice can be defined as the way managers treat justice receivers, just like human aspect in organizational practices in procedural justice (Cited in: Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

The issue of justice has an important place in the Turkish culture and Eastern Islamic countries. In many written sources, it is emphasized that rulers must be fair. Justice is the symbol of the sultan, one of the main characters, in *Kutadgu Bilig* by Yusuf Has Hacip (2008), which reflects the value of justice for a ruler. Farabi (1990) suggests in *El-Medinet'ül Fazıla* that ensuring justice is one of the main sources of a government. İbn-i Haldun (2004) in his *Mukaddime* attaches much importance to justice and states that the existence of a government depends on justice. According to İbn-i Haldun (2004), a government which does not function on the basis of justice or rights is bound to collapse, no matter how powerful it may be. In the Ottoman Empire, the role of the managerial class is to ensure justice and human welfare within the country (Şahin, 2005). Justice has an important place not only in social life, but also in organizational life in the Turkey culture. Yılmaz (2006) defines justice as one of the crucial factors in primary school organizational life. The school administrators and teachers included in the study valued justice in the top rank. Also, Taşdan (2008) obtained similar findings in his study. Accordingly, it might be suggested that justice is one of the most important values in school organizational life.

In Turkey, there have been organizational justice studies in non-educational organizations (e.g., Aykut, 2007; Dilek, 2004; Dilek, 2005; Eker, 2006; Günaydın, 2001; İşbaşı, 2000, 2001; İşcan & Naktiyok, 2004; Karabay, 2004; Söyük, 2007; Wasti, 2001; Yıldırım, 2002; Yılmaz & Sevinç, 2004) and educational organizations (Atalay, 2005; Aydın & Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2008; Cömert, Demirtaş, Üstüner & Özer, 2008; Polat, 2007; Polat & Celep, 2008; Tan, 2006; Taşdan, Oğuz & Ertan-Kantos, 2006; Taşdan & Yılmaz, 2008; Titrek, 2009; Yılmaz & Taşdan, 2009). In these studies, it is seen that organizational justice was examined through sub-dimensions. The purpose of the present study is to examine organizational justice at secondary schools as a whole and determine teachers' perceptions. In this respect, the purpose of the study, more specifically, is to determine secondary public school teachers' per-

ceptions about organizational justice in Kütahya provinces. To this end, the following questions are answered:

1. What are secondary public school teachers' perceptions about organizational justice?
2. Do secondary public school teachers' perceptions about organizational justice differ according to gender, branch, educational background, age, seniority, number of teachers, and number of students?

Method

This study employed the survey method. Two hundred twenty two secondary school teachers who were randomly chosen from Kütahya province made up the sample of the study. Of the 222 participants, 41.4% ($n = 92$) were females, 58.6% were males ($n = 130$). Participating teachers were from 20 different branches. For easier analysis, the branches were grouped under two categories "science and mathematics" and "social branches". Accordingly, 28.8% of the participants were from science and mathematics and 71.2% were from social branches.

The data of the study were gathered, using the Organizational Justice Scale (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). The original form of the Organizational Justice Scale consists of 10 Likert-type items. The scoring of all the scale items is performed directly. The original form of the scale constitutes one powerful dimension. Factor loading values of the scale items are higher than .77 and the explained variance rate is 78%. Reliability coefficient of the form is $\alpha = .97$ (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). The scale was adapted into Turkish by Taşdan and Yılmaz (2008). The adapted form of the scale also consists of 10 Likert-type items and the scale has a single factor. The eigen value of the factor is 6.17. The explained variance by the scale is 61.74%. Factor loading values of the items in the Organizational Justice Scale ranged from .44 to .89. According to the results of the reliability analysis, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be $\alpha = .92$ (Taşdan & Yılmaz, 2008). The scale is answered as follows: 1-I totally disagree, 2-I disagree, 3-I moderately agree, 4-I agree 5-I totally agree. High scores from the scale show positive opinions about organizational justice (Hoy & Tarter, 2004).

The scale was pilot tested in a group of 120 secondary school teachers. The validity of the instrument was established with an exploratory factor analysis, and reliability coefficient was obtained by the use

of Cronbach's Alpha. According to results of the validity analysis scale constitutes one dimension. Factor loading values of the items included in the scale ranged from 0.39 to 0.87, and explained variance was 53%. Reliability coefficient of the form is $\alpha = .88$. For data analysis, descriptive statistics, t test and one way-ANOVA were used.

Findings

Mean score ($\bar{X}=3.75$) of the secondary school teachers included in the study corresponds to the answer "I agree". Accordingly, it might be suggested that the teachers included in the study had positive opinions about organizational justice but these perceptions were not highly agreed with. The mean score of all the answers to the items by the participants was closer to the answer "I agree." The mean score of the answers by the participants ranged from 3.68 to 3.84. They mostly agreed with the following item: "The behaviors of the school principals are consistent" ($\bar{X}=3.84$). When the answers are examined, it is seen that 64.8% of the participants gave these two answers: "I totally agree and I agree". Accordingly, it might be suggested that most participants considered that behaviors of school administrators consistent. The items with which the participants least agreed were: "Nobody is treated like preferential in this school" ($\bar{X}=3.68$) and "Principal treats everyone in this school fairly" ($\bar{X}=3.72$). Although 60.3% of the participants gave the answers "I totally agree and I agree" for the item "Nobody is treated like preferential in this school", 15.3% of them answered "I totally disagree and I disagree".

The participants' perceptions about organizational justice do not differ according to gender [$t_{(220)}=0.14$; $p>0.05$]; branch [$t_{(216)}=0.33$; $p>0.05$]; educational background [$t_{(220)}=0.11$; $p>0.05$] and the number of teachers [$t_{(220)}=0.32$; $p>0.05$]. The participants' perceptions about organizational justice differ significantly according to age [$F_{(2-213)}=3.40$; $p<0.05$]. There is a difference between those with an age of "21-30 years" ($\bar{X}=39.85$) and those of "31-40" years ($\bar{X}=36.71$). The participants' perceptions about organizational justice differ according to seniority [$F_{(3-208)}=5.61$; $p<0.05$]. There is a difference between the teachers with "6-10 years of experience" and the other groups. The perceptions of the teachers with "6-10 years of experience" ($\bar{X}=34.05$) were more negative than those of the other groups. The participants' perceptions about organizational justice differ according to the number of students [$F_{(2-209)}=2.87$; $p<0.05$]. There is a difference between those with the number of students "1-500 students" ($\bar{X}=35.61$) and those of "501-1000" students ($\bar{X}=38.54$).

Results

The purpose of the present study is to determine secondary public school teachers' perceptions about organizational justice and whether these perceptions differ according to gender, age, seniority, branch, educational background, the number of students, and the number of teachers. The study is one of the few studies in Turkey which examine organizational justice at schools (Atalay, 2005; Aydın & Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2008; Cömert et al., 2008; Polat, 2007; Tan, 2006; Taşdan & Yılmaz, 2008; Yılmaz & Taşdan, 2009). The findings of the study show that secondary public school teachers' organizational justice perceptions are positive. The participants' perceptions correspond to the answer: "I agree". High scale scores reflect positive organizational justice perceptions. In other studies (Atalay, 2005; Cömert et al., 2008; Polat, 2007; Polat & Celep, 2008; Tan, 2006; Yaylacı, 2004; Yılmaz & Taşdan, 2009), similar findings were obtained.

As it is clear, both secondary and primary school teachers' perceptions about organizational justice are similar. Although these perceptions are not so high, they are generally at a moderate or high level. When the fact that employees' organizational justice perceptions play an important role in their organization-related attitudes and behaviors (Şahin, 2007), it can be said that the participants' perceptions should have been higher, because low organizational justice perceptions lead to employee dissatisfaction and affect their job performances (Cropanzano & Wright, 2003). Also, employees might change their effort levels (Yücel & Gülvüren, 2007), display negative behaviors or their job satisfaction level may decrease and they become less motivated. Employees' perceptions about justice in practices at workplace may affect their organizational commitment and trust in managers. Justice in procedure practices are based on and gains is an indicator of managers' respect for employees' rights and personal values (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Moreover, positive organizational justice perceptions will cause employees to consider themselves as a part of the organization, become easier going in their job relationships and establish relationships based on trust. As Tansky (1993) stated, employee organizational justice perceptions affect their attitudes toward job and organizational behaviors. In this context, it is important that teachers should have high organizational justice perceptions. High organizational justice perceptions will lead to more positive attitudes toward the job and an increase in voluntary behaviors of

teachers because positive organizational justice perceptions might be motivating (Tan, 2006).

Educational institutions deal with people and schools exist to add values to people. Although there is no consensus about when values or value systems are first observed in individuals (Yılmaz, 2008), it is obvious that schools have an important role in adding values. However, low organizational justice perceptions might cause problems in adding value for teachers who are supposed to donate future generations with values such as justice, honesty, sincerity, and equality.

Employee organizational injustice perceptions might be caused by the fact that those who deserve punishments are not given any punishments, heavy or lenient punishments or those which are contradictory with the previous ones of the same kind, unfair methods of punishment (Trevino, 1992), unfair distribution of rewards or benefits, unfair delegation, lack of delegation for those who do not function properly or constant delegation for those who function efficiently. On the other hand, it is concluded that in the Turkish educational system reward is not much allowed, the criteria for reward are not clearly stated, but punishments take place in much more frequency (Seçkin, 1990). According to similar studies, the reason for that is that administrators do not understand teachers' needs (Seyhani, Özder & Konedralı, 2009).

The perceptions of the participants do not differ according to gender. In the literature, it is seen that there are studies which found differences according to gender (Tan, 2006; Polat, 2007) and there are others which did not (Anderson & Shiner, 2003; Cited in: Cömert et al, 2008; Yılmaz & Taşdan, 2009). In the present study, despite the slight numerical difference, perceptions of female teachers are more negative than those of male teachers, such differences did not reach a level of significance. When the results of organizational justice studies are considered, it is clear that organizational justice perceptions of female employees are lower than those of male employees (Yürür, 2008). In this case, the fact that school administrators are mostly male might be influential since educational management is one of the professions where women consistently constitute a minority (Tan, 1996). Women usually focus on low status teaching work where professional skills are considered to be close to mothering or nursing. On the other hand, it is men who have the authority of making decisions about school life and teaching and they supervise schools (Tan, 2002).

The perceptions of the participants do not differ according to branch and educational background. Accordingly, it might be suggested that the organizational justice perceptions of the participants are not affected by the variables of branch and educational background. The perceptions of the participants do not differ according to the number of teachers in service, but they differ according to the number of students. Despite this fact, organizational justice perceptions of teachers in small schools are lower.

The perceptions of the participants differ according to age. Concerning age, the younger participants have more positive perceptions than the older ones. The perceptions of the participants differ according to seniority. Teachers with “6-10 years of experience” have more negative perceptions than the others. When comparisons according to age and seniority are all taken into account, there is a significant correlation observed. When the fact that younger employees have less seniority is considered, it might be suggested that the two findings are consistent. According to the findings of the study, the following might be suggested: \

1. In the study, it was seen that secondary school teachers did not have high organizational justice perceptions. Measures to increase these perceptions must be taken by school administrations.
2. The participants least agreed with the following items: “No one is preferentially treated in this school” and “The school principal treats everyone equally”. School administrators must be more sensible while treating equal people equally and fairly.
3. It was found that organizational justice perceptions of teachers in small schools were lower although perceptions of the participants did not differ according to the number of teachers in service, but they differed according to the number of students. Future studies might examine large schools versus small schools, concerning organizational justice perceptions.
4. In comparisons according to gender, there were differences found in some studies, whereas others did not observe any. In future studies, the use of this variable is important in terms of obtaining generalizable information.
5. The effects of organizational structure and personal traits on organizational justice perceptions might be examined.

6. The results of the study and the related interpretations are limited with the study group included. Further studies on organizational justice will contribute to the generalizability of results. In this respect, it is advisable that organizational justice studies be renewed in secondary schools and conducted in primary schools and high schools.
7. Examining the correlation between organizational justice perceptions and variables such as democratic attitudes, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, organizational trust, bureaucracy, school-environment relations, organizational climate, organizational culture and leadership behaviors might be useful.

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