

**MODERATING EFFECT OF PERCEPTION OF
ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON THE NEXUS OF
ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND EMPLOYEE
HAPPINESS: A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKAN
APPAREL EMPLOYEES**

¹*N. Jasintha

Department of Human Resource Management,
Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce,
University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka
jasinthabn@univ.jfn.ac.lk

²T. Raveendran

Department of Human Resource Management,
Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce,
University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka
rthanes@univ.jfn.ac.lk

ABSTRACT

The current study explores the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness among Sri Lankan Apparel sector workers. This study integrates the social exchange theory into organizational justice and employee happiness research. Since happiness is a crucial drive to the entire employee outcomes, it is essential to make employees happy in the workplace as they spend much time there. Therefore, enhancing happiness in the apparel sector is quite difficult considerably. However, previous studies paid attention to justice, but no attention was paid to justice and employee happiness among the apparel sector employees with the effect of perception of organizational politics as moderator. The survey research strategy was used here, and data were collected from conveniently chosen 399 employees working in the apparel industry. Smart PLS 3.0 was utilized to analyze the data to identify the nexus of justice and happiness. The results divulged that individual with the perception of justice are more likely to have high happiness. In addition to that, the results revealed that perception of organizational politics significantly moderates the nexus of justice and happiness. The study on employee happiness pushes the boundaries of Human Resource Management literary works while also providing the congregation with sound theoretical and practical applications. Policymakers can implement more policies to reduce organizational politics and creating a

better working environment. This study can be conducted longitudinally to determine the actual level of happiness over time to gain a better grasp of apparel sector workers.

Keywords: apparel employees, employee happiness and organizational justice

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing strategic and economic climate, the competency and efficiency of a multicultural workplace are the most essential characteristics of the workforce for organizations worldwide. Retaining competent and efficient employees is critical for organizations worldwide currently of fierce competition (Mahmood et al. 2020). As a result, it can be stated that preserving and constructively involving the employees is vital for business success and protracted survival. The workforce who are deeply involved are found to have a positive impact on the favourable outcomes, whereby they contribute to the overall organizational effectiveness that is desired by businesses in order to achieve their goals (Arciuli, Emerson & Llewellyn 2019; Xiong & Wen 2020).

Since human resources are the primary element that leads an organization's performance, an institution's capacity to sustain its human resources will provide higher rewards and success to the company itself. High performers are highly sought after by all businesses to fulfill their objectives, produce specialized goods and services, and finally obtain a competitive advantage to be the top company in the industry.

In order to work better in the organization, it is to keep the inner peace within ourselves and organizational peace. This organizational peace comes from fairness in every activity. Inner peace usually comes from happiness. The

happiness is the sensation of joy and purposefulness associated with numerous areas of an individual's life, including employment, family, social, spiritual and academic (Opatha & Uresha 2020). Since people spend almost two-third of their time in workplaces, it is imperative to keep an organizational environment happier. It has been shown that human beings may give organizations a competitive edge through their innovation and creativity (Kowalski & Loretto 2017).

Further, it is known that happy employees have more new and unique thoughts and perspectives since their minds are overflowing with pleasant emotions and thoughts (Thompson & Lee 2021). Therefore, one of the most critical HR initiatives in the twenty-first century is to help employees improve their subjective and objective well-being (Kowalski & Loretto 2017). Hence, happiness, is the fuel that drives every single employee towards the betterment of the organization through the achievement of goals. Thus, every organization has to keep their employees happier as much as possible. Otherwise, the level of commitment, performance, and motivation would go lower while turnover, absenteeism, counter-productive behaviour and withdrawal behaviour would go higher (Hanif & Shao 2018). Therefore, keeping a happier employee within the organizational premises is a mounting concern since it plays a vital role in the organisation and its self-accomplishment (Haris, Winskowski & Engdahl 2007).

Keeping every employee happier is crucial amidst of work environment since it is with various kinds of people. Normally, the difference of opinions, combats, jealousy and backstabbing are present while there many employees. In addition to that, organizational politics is everywhere, which is true, an

inevitable part of any organization that has piqued the interest of academics due to its strong relationship with organizational results (Hanif et al., 2018). Since politics is a self-maximization process (Ampofo, Owusu-Ansah & Owusu 2021) it has the potential to weaken the organizational outcomes (Hanif, Hanif & Shao 2018).

The role of organizations is required to improve any country, and when it plays well, the successful organization can influence changes, influence a deliberate authority to frame, and establish critical capacities of individuals and national economy. With dynamic business practices, companies struggle to address unanticipated issues that necessitate the most efficient use of their resources. As people are aware that the apparel sector plays a major role in the Sri Lankan economy where a substantial amount of people highly rely on the apparel industry works, it should have considerable attention on the studies. Since people possess a high amount of stress due to the high workload and over time in the apparel sector (Nirojan & Mayuran 2021), it is vital to make each employee happier in the workplace amidst political perception because the political perception has the power to reduce the level of satisfaction and commitment (Abbas & Raja 2014).

Although there are few studies about political perception, this study would add value to the Sri Lankan context by adding the moderating effect of politics on the nexus of organizational justice and happiness. There have been numerous studies on the direct relationship between organizational justice and organizational outcome, but more research is needed to determine the relationship between organizational justice and employee morale

characteristics, specific happiness. As a result, this research is being carried out to fill a theoretical gap in the literature.

Hence, the objectives of the research are as follows:

The objective of the research is:

- (i) to investigate the significant nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness.
- (ii) to investigate the moderating effect of organizational politics on the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness.

Therefore, the scenario raises the following research questions:

- (iii) Whether there is a significant nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness?
- (iv) To what extent the organizational politics moderate the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness?

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT WITH THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Organizational Justice and Employee Happiness

Organizational justice is concerned with members' perceptions of whether the entity treats them equitably or not (Greenberg 1987). Scholars have divided organizational justice into distributive and organizational justice (Cropanzano & Greenberg 2001). Distributive justice focuses on fairness activities in organizations based on equity. It highly focuses on performance rating of employees, payment level and the procedure for performances, which are provided by the organizations to the effort (Cropanzano & Greenberg 2001). Organizational justice refers to the fairness of the decision-making process in

every aspect of the organisational activities regarding how promotions or pay raises are done (Korsgaard, Schweiger & Sapienza 1995).

On the other hand, employee happiness is a psychological concept that cannot be easily defined or comprehensively described because it varies from person to person (Opatha & Uresha 2020). Nevertheless, according to Bataineh (2019), happiness refers to how people perceive and evaluate their life as a whole. Happiness is a catch-all phrase for everything positive that adds to the 'wellness' or 'life satisfaction' of individuals and communities (Veenhoven 2012). Opatha (2019) stated that it is a sensation of pleasure, fulfilment and getting delighted. As per Veenhoven (2017), happiness is the degree to which the individual favourably views the general effectiveness of his or her life, or how much one loves the life one lives. If you are a happy person, you enjoy your life and keep a positive attitude, people, and aspects around you that help you to be happy. This includes subjective wellbeing, which focuses on joyfulness over pains and satisfaction in life where people have a favourable attitude towards work and family through virtues with self-actualization (Opatha 2019; Vinney 2020).

This nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness can be seen through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET). The central premise of SET is that human behavior is characterized by an exchange of resources between players that can simply be said reciprocity (Zafirovski 2005), and swap characterizes all social interactions. Blau (1964) defines social exchange as the discretionary activities of individuals motivated by the future returns from their voluntary basis induced behavioral patterns. In other words, people cooperate depending on a self-interested assessment of the costs and benefits.

This type of reciprocity often come from the organizational level, which reaches out less powered part like employees. If those employees want such a connection, he or she will reciprocate the favourable treatment with his or her behavior patterns.

Justice, in particular, will tend to generate a sense of support from the organization. Employees want to think that decisions are made justly genuinely. Workers will become more committed in response to this support, and this commitment, in turn, will engender the extra effort that leads to higher work performance and other efficient work behaviors, contrariwise it reduces absenteeism, turnover and deviant behaviour (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli 2001). According to exchange theory, workers who perceive organizational injustice are likely to reduce, if not lose their sentimental relationship to their current employer. Workers consider progression, support, and job security to be employer obligations, while dedication and minimum stay are their obligations. Conversely, when employees believe that the procedures in their workplace are fair, they may increase their emotional engagement with the organization (Cropanzano & Rupp 2008).

At the time of our investigation, researchers discovered no previous studies examined the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness. Previous studies also confirm that the organizations that possess fairness in every action, including resolving conflicts, allocation of resources, promotional opportunities, and rewards, would give satisfaction in the job, leading to a high level of commitment and lower the quitting intentions (Rubel & Kee 2013; Tsai & Wu 2010). Hence, the satisfied employee is all an

organization needs who can be considered a contented and happier employee.

Therefore, it is hypothesized as:

H1: Organizational justice positively relates to employee happiness

Effect of perception of organizational politics on the nexus of Organizational Justice and Employee Happiness

Although researchers have hypothesized that organizational justice positively relates to employee happiness, it is also possible that the perception of organizational politics will influence the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness.

Organizational politics is viewed in terms of both perception and behavior. Organizational politics is frequently described in terms of self-serving behaviors; unlawful actions, and acquiring advantages while jeopardizing the interests of others (Ferris & Hochwarter 2011). Organizational politics is defined as a specific sort of power struggle in which people are directly or indirectly involved in various types of effective tactics. The primary goal of such power tactics is to maximize personal or collective benefits while minimizing the effects of adverse outcomes (Vigoda 2007). Organizational politics occurs in all organizations to varying degrees (Faye & Long 2014) and is used to understand individual goals and benefits, protect or advance one's professional growth, and gain resources or advantages from the company (Landells & Albrecht 2019).

Perceived organizational politics can potentially disrupt the employee's constructive organizational behaviour, employees' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors (Choi et al. 2018). Organizational politics decreases job satisfaction;

organizational commitment increases job anxiety, job stress and turnover intentions. Along with the same lines, while the employees feel there are no politics, employees would exhibit higher job satisfaction and higher performance (Anderson, Bernauer & Huber 2018; Bicchieri, Dimant & Sonderegger 2019). As a result, an individual's emotional attitude and behavior are demotivated and demoralized because of the perception of organizational politics (Eldor 2017). While the employees perceive the environment as highly politicized, they are uncertain about the organizational system. Perception of organizational politics declines employee attitudes and employee outcomes (Poon 2006).

When employees perceive a higher level of perception of organizational politics in the work setting but are treated fairly in every aspect, employees would think that justice is quite rare in the organization and perceive it and comparing to employees who perceive a low level of politics in their work environment would think there is justice in the organization. Therefore, based on the above argument, employees' political perception would weaken the relationship between justice and happiness. Specifically, organisational justice and employee happiness become weaker in a highly politicized work environment. Therefore, it is hypothesized as:

H2: Perception of Organizational politics weaken the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The sample of this study consists of middle-level employees from the Sri Lankan apparel sector. Since the apparel sector contributes to the Sri Lankan

economy, we have used the apparel industry for our study. This study used a self-administrated questionnaire for the collection of data. Of the 470 questionnaires, distributed 432 questionnaires were received. Among that, 399 questionnaires were in usable condition. The response rate, which is 399, is satisfactory for this study since the expected responses can be 384 or above for the unknown population (Conroy 2015). For collecting the data, a convenient sampling method was employed. Participants were informed that their replies would be kept private and anonymous.

Of the 399 respondents, 73% were male respondents while 27% were female; since the males co-op up with the stressful situations well, ability to work hard over the family responses, they are in notable positions. Approximately 64% of people are married, while 36% of respondents were single. Concerning age, 52% of the respondents were between 31-40 age group and 28% of the respondents were between 21-30 age group. With respect to experience, 49% of the respondents had more than 10 years of experience while others had less than ten years of experience. In total, 21% of the respondents have completed postgraduate, 33% of the respondents completed their first degree and 39% have completed professional courses.

Measures

All factors, including organizational justice, employee happiness, and perception of organizational politics, were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with one indicating "strongly disagree" and five indicating "strongly agree."

Organizational justice: Organizational justice was measured using a seven-item scale developed by Moorman (1991). A sample item is "There are

procedures which allow having an opportunity to challenge a judgement”. The Cronbach alpha was 0.91.

Employee Happiness: Employee happiness was measured using a twenty-item scale developed by Opatha and Uresha (2020). A sample item is “ I often feel joy, contented and fortunate in my life rather feeling sadness, disgust and anger”. The Cronbach alpha was 0.90.

Perception of Organizational Politics: Perception of Organizational Politics were measured by using a fifteen-item scale developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997). A sample item is “There is no place for yes man”. The Cronbach alpha was 0.89.

DATA ANALYSIS

PLS-SEM model was chosen for testing the above-said hypotheses. Utilization of the PLS-SEM model aids in analysing the complicated model, which includes moderation and mediation (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2013). Before starting the analysis, the perfection of the data was validated; no values outer of the specified range was revealed, and the mean, standard deviation, and correlation appeared to be adequate. In addition, no straight-lining or contradictory replies were found in the data set.

Reliability

Conventionally, to measure the internal consistency, ‘Cronbach Alpha’ was used to provide a traditionalist measurement in PLS-SEM since all the factor loadings of Organizational justice, Employee happiness and organizational

politics were also above 0.6, which is an acceptable range (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2012).

As it is shown in table 1, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability is of each construct utilized in this study are also more significant than the usual threshold value of 0.06. As a result, all three reflective latent variables have shown excellent internal consistency reliability levels.

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

In order to determine the convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each latent variable is calculated. As shown in Table 1, all the AVE value of organizational justice, employee happiness, and organizational politics are more significant than the adequate threshold value of 0.5, endorsing convergent validity.

As per Fornell and Larcker (1981), if the square root of AVE in each latent variable is greater than other correlation values among the other latent variables, this value is used to show discriminant validity. As per table 1, these values also have given a discriminant validity where the square root of each variable is greater than other variables value.

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

As per the rule of thumb, collinearity should be less than 5. However, collinearity value (VIF) for each of these constructs is nearly two (2). Therefore, it is shown that multi-collinearity was not the issue for this structural model. Further, this model is free from common method biases (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt 2011; Kock 2015).

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, reliability, validity for the constructs

Construct	Mean	Std.	CrA	CR	AVE	AC	FR	OP
Employee	3.98	0.71	0.87	0.90	0.53	0.73		
Happiness								
Organizational	4.32	0.67	0.61	0.79	0.55	0.67	0.75	
Justice								
Organizational	3.62	0.91	0.77	0.87	0.69	0.72	0.61	0.83
Politics								

Source: Survey Data (2021)

Hypothesis testing via bootstrapping

Using a technique known as bootstrapping, Smart-PLS can produce T-statistics for statistical significance of both inner and outer models. In this approach, many subsamples (e.g., 5000) are drawn from the initial sample with substitution to get standard bootstrap errors, which yield approximated T-values for structural path significance testing (Tenenhaus et al. 2005). The Bootstrap result approximates data normalcy. The researcher has utilized 399 cases, which are significant levels with 5000 samples for setting bootstrapping, shown in Table II. T statistics of all variables were also in the range of acceptable significance level ($P < 0.05$), and the directions are expectedly. Further, it can be shown in the Table II, both the path coefficient and moderating effect are also significant levels, which are below 0.05 significance level.

Table 2. Path coefficient, T statistics, p-value and confidence interval (CI)

Proposed paths	Path coefficient	T statistics	p-value	Bias	2.5%	97.5%
OJ-EH	0.373	3.664	0.000	0.004	0.139	0.473
OP-EH	0.491	2.827	0.000	0.032	0.108	0.449
Moderating effect- EH	-0.092	1.376	0.017	0.002	-0.215	0.041

Source: Survey Data (2021)

This study focused on investigating the moderating effect of perception of organizational politics on the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness. Hair et al. (2013) criteria were followed to complete the moderating effect of perception of organizational politics. There is a negative interaction of perception of organizational politics on employee happiness. That is $b=-0.092$, which is significant ($p<0.05$).

The path coefficient is 0.373 on the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness ($b=0.373$, $p<0.05$). Hence, it is confirmed that there is a positive relationship between organizational justice and Employee happiness. As per the results, while the employees' perception towards organizational politics become lower, the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness will be increased ($b= 0.465$ (i.e. $(0.373+0.092)$). On the other hand, while employees perceive that there is politics in the organization, the nexus of organizational justice in rewards and Employee happiness will be increased ($b= 0.281$ (i.e. $(0.373+-0.092)$).

Therefore, it can be said that, when the employees perceive that there is organizational politics in the apparel industry, the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness will be reduced.

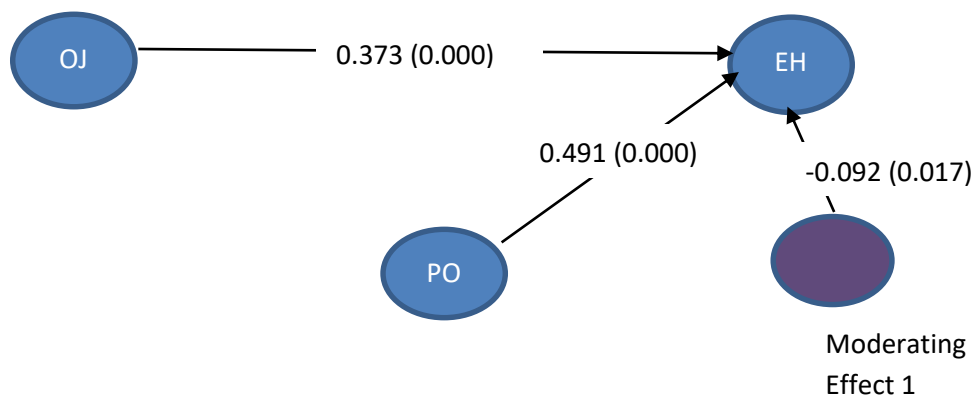


Figure 1: Moderating effect

Model Fit

SRMR, d ULS, Chi-Square, and NFI were computed while considering model fit. The SRMR was established by Hair et al. (2014) as a goodness of fit statistic for PLS-SEM that might be used to avoid model misspecification, with 0.08 as the acceptable value. NFI is 0.788, indicating a model fit (Hair et al. 2013). As a result, the model can be called to be fit.

DISCUSSIONS

This study has revealed that organizational justice is positively related to employee happiness among the apparel sector employees. Since our study is the first study combining justice with happiness, this study is somewhat consistent with organizational justice, and job satisfaction (Tsai & Wu 2010)

and commitment (Kim 2012) researches. Hence, we can say happiness is an inevitable concept, which is the most precious thing in any organization around the globe for smooth functioning. Further, it is confirmed that justice in organizational actions creates employee happiness, which helps retain the staff.

As expected from the moderation effect of perception of organizational politics, it weakens the nexus level of organizational justice and employee happiness. Since this is also tested at first in the above-said relationship, no prior research on it to confirm. Although there are several types of research that affirm perception of organizational politics, which is inevitable in organizational life, weaken the employee outcome (Akanbi & Ofoegbu 2013). Although the perception of organizational politics is pervasive, it is vital to focus on it and use it constructively. In addition, politics is common in nature regardless of males and females in the apparel industry.

Theoretical and practical implications

This study has several practical and theoretical implications. First, this study expressively contributes to the theory in human resource management and organizational behaviour. A plethora of studies have highlighted the role of organizational justice in employee outcomes. The results of the study first validated the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness in the apparel sector with the help of social exchange theory. Secondly, this study has integrated social exchange theory into the South Asian context, especially the Sri Lankan phenomenon. Thirdly, this study extends the understanding of the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness and the moderating effect of organizational politics among the apparel sector

employees. Fourthly, in addition to that, this study incorporates perception of organizational politics, which adds new knowledge into the nexus of organizational justice and Employee happiness. Fifth, this particular study encompasses the generalizability of Employee happiness to an eastern developing country, Sri Lanka. The current study seeks to fill a void in existing literature by broadening the literature on justice and employee outcomes by leveraging recent instrumentation such as employee happiness, whereby the effect of perception of organizational politics on a broad spectrum of employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes was investigated thoroughly in this study. Finally, the findings of the current study endorse the "social exchange theory," which defines the overall organisational concern and assistance for the employees' comfort, creates an atmosphere of reciprocity among the employees, and instils positive outlooks and behaviors in the employees, which they channel toward their organization effectiveness (Knippenberg & Hogg 2018).

With respect to practical implications, this study suggests that organizations should possess some strategies for keeping employees happy. This happiness usually leads the employees towards high commitment and extra-role behaviours. The top-level managers should be cautious about political movement within the organizations in order to reduce the level of perception of politics. Policymakers have to focus on reducing the level of organizational politics, improving organizational justice and enhancing the level of employee happiness at the workplace (Jehanzab 2020). The organizational support towards employee outcome have become a perilous tool in organizations (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Further, it is vital to bring transformational change in designing employee happiness through policymakers. The apparel industry must add value to their existing justice system to eliminate the hazardous politics to improve employee morale behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (Sheng et al. 2019). In addition to that, during this pandemic, it is crucial to maintain a happier environment within the workplace since people are afraid of covid-19 outbreaks and variants. The findings of this research study can help managers and policymakers in the apparel industry understand the value of happiness and justice at work. Managers can learn from this research study how important it is to develop an organizational culture of justice and reciprocity, which will positively impact employee engagement and happiness (Mahmood et al. 2020).

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to identify the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness with the moderating effect of perception of organizational politics in Sri Lankan Apparel sector employees. The finding of the study disclosed that there is a positive moderate level nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness and perception of organizational politics weaken the above-said nexus as politics have many destructive outcomes (Eldor 2017). Though a small amount of variations in politics is encountered in this research; this will have a huge impact on the strength of above-said relationship.

By adding new knowledge to the current literature, this study significantly contributed to the future literature. This was the only study focused on apparel employees' happiness in a broad field. Furthermore, it shed light on political

perceptions and their moderating effect on the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness, yielding significant results. Furthermore, it has added to the existing justice literature by investigating the nexus of organizational justice and employee happiness research among apparel employees, which the related study lacked in the Sri-Lankan perspective.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Like other studies, this study also has some limitations. These limitations would give plenty of scope for further research. First, the impending limitation is the sample size, can further be increased. Secondly, this study is explanatory; hence, the quantitative study was carried out. However, to get a deeper understanding of employee happiness in the apparel sector, a qualitative study can be carried out. Third, this study focuses on Apparel sector workers. Therefore, generalizability of the results would only be applicable for specific industrial people. This model can be utilized for several sectors i.e telecommunications, banks, government sector, airline, etc. Fourth, this study considered on middle-level employees only excluding minor and top-level employees. Hence, they can be considered.

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