

ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract

Purpose – This study discusses the relationship between organizational justice (OJ) and employee relations (ER) through organizational commitment (OC) as a mediator. The relationships between variables are presented in a conceptual framework. **Design/methodology/approach** – This study develops propositions on the relationships between the variables based on several journal articles related to this topic. The database that was used to search related studies and literature was Emerald, SAGE, ResearchGate, and SpringerLink. **Proposition** – Based on several reviewed literature, there are four propositions that this study proposes: 1) There is a positive relationship between OJ and ER, 2) there is a positive relationship between OJ and OC, 3) there is a positive relationship between OC and ER, and 4) the relationship between OJ and ER is mediated by OC.

Keywords – *Employee relations, Employer-employee relations, Organizational justice, Fairness, Organizational commitment, Employee loyalty, Employee commitment*

Paper type – Conceptual paper

A. Introduction

Employee relations (ER) has been a trending topic in the Human Resource field for many years. Researchers have found numerous antecedents and factors that can affect ER. Some of the factors are organizational justice (OJ) and organizational commitment (OC). Many researchers have also emphasized that effective ER plays a crucial role in the success of each employee as well as the organization (Gennard, 2002; Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). ER can ensure the organization's long-term success (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019).

However, it should be noted that ER is not simply a relationship between employees and co-workers but also employees with managers, leaders, and

organizations as a whole. What makes ER crucial is because without employees there will be no employers; without employees, there will be no managers and leaders; without employees, there will be no organization. Employees are the assets of the organization (Uzma, 2015; Mwangangi & Atikiya, 2018); as vital assets, employees contribute to organizational success (Men, 2012). Employees are the ones who support the organization by providing knowledge (Fahey & Prusak, 1998) and by helping to organize, run, and control the system in the organization (Kulkarni, Ravindra, & Freeze, 2007). For an organization to survive and to succeed, it needs employees to fully commit to the organization. Employees' loyalty is



shown by their commitment through active involvement in the work, emotional attachment, and a clear sense of belonging to the organization (Rajput, Singhal, & Tiwari, 2016).

ER is a dependent relationship. The relationship between employees and employers is interdependency where employees offer their service to the organization and employers give rewards for their service (Mwangangi & Atikiya, 2018). Employees are the *stakeholders* (Kim & Rhee, 2011) and the *ambassadors* of the organization whom they represent (Rhee, 2004); thus, organizations should give better care to employees to improve their satisfaction (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018) by making sure of their well-being and by developing a good employer-employee relationship (Holtzhausen & Fourie, 2009). Good ER results in various benefits such as an improvement in employees' determination, loyalty, commitment, satisfaction, productivity, and low turnover intention (Sweeney, 2009; Mwangangi & Atikiya, 2018).

Employee relation according to Tsui and Wang (2002) is "the formal and informal, the economic, social, and psychological connection between employee and his employer" (p. 78). This relationship is unique and mutual. It has to be supported by fairness and loyalty. Organizations ought to show fairness for employees to show loyalty. Abbas (2017) wrote that organizational culture and leadership style could significantly affect employees' loyalty to the organization. Fair and proficient organizational culture leads to positive and good employee engagement where employees enjoy their

job, understand, and support each other (Gilson, 2008). This is why organizations must show justice in the organizational culture, for example, on monetary reward, learning/training opportunities, career development, and communication with supervisors (Chen, Chen, Tsui, & Chiang, 2016).

Previous Studies on ER

Various studies prove the benefits of building, creating, and maintaining a good ER. According to Ployhart (2006), studies related to ER are very few regardless of how significant it is. A study by Muma, et.al. (2019) found that ER significantly and positively affected employees' retention in universities in Kenya.

Another study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2009-2010) as cited in Muma, et.al. (2019) showed that effective employer-employee communication led to higher returns (47%). This indicates that a good ER significantly affects organizational achievement. Noah (2018) as cited in Muma, et.al. (2019) also found that when an organization actively involved employees in its activity such as decision-making, it could improve employees' feelings of attachment toward the organization and thus enhanced employer-employee relations.

Idowu and Ndidiamaka (2018) who conducted a study in the retail industry in South Africa highly suggested organizations to improve the supervisor-subordinate relationship. According to the authors, both parties should put the effort into establishing, enhancing, and maintaining this relationship. One way to achieve a good quality supervisor-



subordinate relationship that the author highlighted is for the subordinates to give high quality work performance and for the supervisors to give proper reward for the performance. "Employees will be more attracted toward the work when they are certain about the rewards and recognition they will receive" (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, & Hasan, 2019); however, the reward system should be appropriate and the pay structure should be effective (Lawler, 1990) for this system to work.

Research Objectives and Problem Statement

Since ER is the most important aspect to help achieve the organizational goal, organizations should create a positive and healthy work environment to boost or enhance good employer-employee relationships (Werhane & Royal, 2009). There have been many studies on the relationship between OJ and ER, OJ and OC, and OC and ER but studies that link the three variables are still rare. Therefore, this study reviews several studies that focus on ER, OJ, and OC and the relationship between OJ and ER, OJ and OC (as mediator), and OC and ER to help the author develops propositions on the relationship between the variables and constructs a conceptual framework that shows the linkage between the variables.

This paper argues that organization needs to improve ER to a more positive, healthy, and strong direction to achieve the organizational goal successfully. One of the ways to improve ER is by creating strong organization justice (OJ) which will lead to an improvement in employee commitment. When employees are fully committed to their job and the

organization, a positive and good relationship between employers and employees can be achieved.

Sahoo and Sahoo (2019) examined the relationship between organizational justice, conflict management, and employee relations with the climate of trust as the mediating variable. The researchers suggested further research to examine other mediating variables besides conflict management. Thus, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for the relationship between organizational justice and employee relations mediated by organizational commitment. It is expected that this study can enrich knowledge about employee relations and can contribute to ER literature.

Theoretical Background

Three theories are used in this study to clarify and explain the proposed framework and propositions. The theories are: 1) Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the basis for the relationship between OJ and ER, 2) Equity theory (ET) as the basis for the relationship between OJ and OC and OC and ER, and 3) Agency theory (AT) as the basis for the relationship between OJ and ER mediated by OC.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) was adapted by Blau (1964). Blau was the first one to propose SET from the "microeconomics" point of view and suggested that in social relationships, both parties should anticipate the reward that they expect from each other. The focus of SET is to bring satisfaction as a result of fair exchange between the people



involved (Cook & Emerson, 1987). The two major elements of SET are “cost” or “negative value” and “reward” or positive value that each of the parties receives (West & Turner, 2007). SET only happens when an organization and employees exchange mutual trust and responsibilities (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, & Hasan, 2019) or in other words when employees give service and in exchange, the organization gives proper reward to employees for their service (Koster, 2011).

Equity Theory

Equity theory (ET) was first proposed by Adams (1963). Adam explained that employees often pursue fairness by maintaining equal cost and reward that they receive compared to what other employee receives. The same explanation was also stated by Guerrero & Afifi (2007). The authors emphasized that ET focuses on fairness in “distribution” and the allocation of “resources” by comparing the cost and rewards that one party and another party receives.

In general, ET focuses on employees’ feelings or views about how management/organization generates fairness in action and attitude and how to deal with these feelings (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002). Specifically, ET describes that employees are more likely to compare their cost (effort or contributions) and reward (what organization gives in return) with other employees (Park & Rainey, 2008) to see if the organization is giving equal or fair reward to each employee. If employees find or feel that the organization shows inequality, it can destroy their determination and commitment (Ugaddan

& Park, 2018). On the contrary, when employees find or feel that the organization treats each employee equally and fairly such as in “distributing resources” (pg. 64) and/or in creating an unbiased and fair *organizational climate*, “they may feel that the organization has high justice values” (pg. 64).

Agency Theory

Agency theory (AT) from an economics point of view was first introduced by Jensen and Meckling (1976) who defined AT as social interaction at work between principals (management, leaders, supervisors, organization) and agents (employees, co-workers) regarding delegation of work and decision-making that principals give/delegate to agents. According to Kopp and Brock (2020) AT helps to describe and settle problems that occur in the relationship between *business principals* such as *shareholders* and *business agents* such as *company executives*. The relationship that is described in this theory is a mutual and interdependency relationship; it means that *principals* depend on *agents* to help them with particular tasks and jobs and *agents* depend on *principals* to reward them for their achievement or contribution.

AT emphasized that “principal delegate work to an agent to act on their behalf” (Lopes, 2016, pg. 5; Eisenhardt, 1989) because an agent has skills and/or knowledge that principal need (Gomez, Mejia, & Balkin, 1992) and will assist the principal to succeed (Harrell-Cook & Ferris, 1997). Based on this theory, the employer-employee relationship and employee-co-worker relationship can succeed only when all parties involved



have mutual interest and commitment (Lopes, 2016). Lopes continued by describing two types of Agency theory relations: 1) *Vertical relation* that involves principals and agents because of common interest between the two parties and 2) *horizontal relation* that involves co-workers. According to Le Gall (2011), *horizontal relation* is crucial because employees spend most of their time with co-workers instead of leaders, supervisors, or managers.

AT also shows that problems will occur when there is a difference in goals between the principals and the agents (Eisenhardt, 1989). One of the problems that often occur in the relationship is favoritism in the workplace. Favoritism is more likely to happen during a job interview, recruitment, delegation of work, payment/bonuses, etc. Favoritism is very destructive to the principal and agent's relationship as well as the organization as a whole (Bandiera, Barankay, & Rasul, 2005; Tyler, 2012). Therefore, this theory suggests that giving and receiving equal costs and rewards will minimize and/or eliminate the problems. Another suggestions are: 1) the relationship between principals and agents has to "produce mutual benefits ... and opportunity" so that there will be mutual satisfaction among the parties (Lopes, 2016), 2) principal and agents have to have the same goal and interest for the relationship to succeed without the huge cost, 3) organization/management has to observe agents' behavior, 4) organization has to prepare appropriate and proper reward to agents, and 5) organization should execute HRM systems that can

control and manage agents' "behaviors and ... decisions" (Vokić, 2016, pg. 15).

Literature Review

Organizational Justice

According to Sahoo & Sahoo (2018), OJ in general refers to "fairness in resource allocation, ... procedures and practices, and treating all employees equally and respectfully" (p. 371). OJ exists when employees feel and experience fairness in the way organization allocates resources, makes decisions, and treats employees (Cropanzano, et.al., 2001). Justice or fairness is greatly essential for organizational success (Mugun, 2013). Maintaining justice in the organization is also mandatory since it contributes to a healthy and good quality ER (Swalhi, et.al., 2017) as well as helps employees to put more effort and commitment to the success of the organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Justice or fairness in the organization encourages employees to be committed and satisfied with their work/job (Greenberg, 1987).

OJ in general effects, highlights, and clarifies organization's and employees' outcomes like OC, satisfaction, and behavior (Greenberg, 1986). Greenberg (1987) was the first to introduce the theory of organizational justice. The author described OJ as an employee's capability to evaluate or estimate an organization's behavior that results in an employee's attitude and/or behavior toward the organization.

There are three models of organizational justice (DeConinck, 2010; Liljegren & Ekberg, 2009; Colquitt, et.al., 2002): 1)



Distributive justice, 2) procedural justice, and 3) interactional justice.

Distributive justice. This model of justice emphasizes that fairness is shown in the result of a decision and allocation of resources. This model has three elements: 1) “equity” or reward that employees receive for their contribution to the organization, 2) “equality” or reward that employees receive equally, and 3) “need” or profit-like reward that employees received based on their agreement with or condition to the organization. Distributive justice closely relates to Equity theory (Adams, 1965) which explains that justice/fairness improves employees’ productivity and satisfaction (Stone & Porter, 1975).

Procedural justice. This model of justice emphasizes fairness in the procedure/process of a result. It is a perception about fairness in procedure or process of deciding on *outcome distribution* (Greenberg, 2006). Procedural justice is considered an essential element of OJ (Ugaddan & Park, 2018). It is more likely to benefit more if used in a long term (Folger, 1991) “because employees consider how to maintain outcome patterns which are perceived fairly or unfairly” (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013, pg. 2).

Interactional Justice. This model of justice emphasizes fairness in organization/management’s treatments to its employees by being considerate and respectful in delivering decision outcomes along with explanations on why it makes such a decision (Bies & Moag, 1986). Interactional justice also relates to how management/organization interacts with

its employees that is clarified in the organizational rules and/or regulations (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013). This model of justice has two types: 1) *Interpersonal justice* or employees’ perceived respect and politeness in how the organization treats them (Colquitt, 2001). 2) *Informational justice* or sufficient information and/or explanation that employees receive as a result of being correct, explicit, and honest (Colquitt, 2001). It is “perceived fairness resulting from transparent and accurate communication about distributional outcomes by decision-makers” (Ugaddan & Park, 2018, pg. 62).

To put it in short, distributive justice is fairness in a result, procedural justice is fairness in a process that leads to a result, and interactional justice is fairness in the relationship between organization and employees.

From among the three models of justice, studies proved that procedural justice more significantly relates to OC and trust while distributive justice more significantly relates to satisfaction (Lewicki & Sheppard, 1987; Folger & Konovsky, 1989) compared to interactional justice. Studies also proved that procedural and distributive justice greatly affected “organizational outcomes” such as “job satisfaction, evaluation of supervisor, conflict/harmony and trust in management, and turnover extension” (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013, pg. 2). Furthermore, as explained above, distributive justice is similar to Equity theory. The difference between distributive and procedural justice is



distributive justice and Equity theory focus mainly on results while procedural justice highlights more on procedure or process that leads to a certain result. However, distributive and procedural justice often shows interdependency to each other because the process is just as important as the result (Greenberg, 1986; Folger & Kanovsky, 1989).

Employee Relations

Employee relation (ER) was one of the most important topics between the year 1989-1998 (Kataria, Kumar, Sureka, & Gupta, 2020). It refers to “formal and informal, economic, social and psychological connection between employee and his or her employer” (Tsui & Wang, 2002, p. 78). It is a relationship between employer and employee that is founded on “justice, equity, trust, effectiveness in managing workplace conflict, satisfaction, commitment, and job performance” (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019, pg. 784). Sahoo and Sahoo’s (2018) emphasized that “employers and employees are the principal actors in the process of ERs” (pg. 371) and positive employer-employee relationship will result to improvement in employees’ productivity (Tansel & Gazioglu, 2014), improvement in a chance to achieve the expected organizational goal (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018), and improvement in organizational and employees’ success (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). However, this relationship should be mutual. Employers and employees should “exchange obligations and rights” to improve ER (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019, pg. 783). Without a mutual relationship, it is difficult to achieve a good ER.

Subramanian (2017), in his article about employer-employee relations, emphasized the importance of ER in organizational success. The author stated as follow:

Maintaining a strong employer-employee relationship can be the key to the ultimate success of an organization, the results are advantageous. It is known that if a strong relationship is in place employees will be more productive, more efficient, create less conflict, and will be more loyal (pg. 39).

Furthermore, the author explained that a good employer-employee relationship could enhance quality communication and knowledge sharing between employer and employee. According to the author, if the organization wants to develop and survive in a competitive world, it has to make sure that there is always improvement in the employer-employee relationship. Only by doing so the organization can be able to succeed and endure any “structural changes and environmental pressures” (pg. 44).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment (OC) was one the most dominant topics in ER between the year 2009-2018 (Kataria, Kumar, Sureka, & Gupta, 2020) and was commonly known as work commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Colquitt, LePine, Wesson, 2009). OC strongly relates to employees’ psychology (Allen & Meyer, 1996) and affected the employer-employee relationship as well as the employee-organization relationship (Meyer & Allen, 1997). OC is a step more than employee loyalty; it refers to a feeling of attachment that employee experience and show



toward their work/job (Carmeli & Freud, 2004; Bratton & Gold, 2007) which affects their decision or desire to stay in an organization (Khalid, et.al., 2015). Nguyen and Aida (2014) explained that when an employee shows high OC, he/she will stay loyal to the organization where they work.

Employees' organizational commitment contributes to and defines the success of an organization (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In other words, OC is a link that connects and unites employees and organizations (Sawithri, Nishanthi, & Amarasinghe, 2017). OC is also the reason employees "willingly" (pg. 177) choose to stay within the organization and put effort to achieve organizational goal. Various factors can affect OC. For example, HR practices like "recruitment, selection, rewards, recognition, and work environment" (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, & Hasan, 2019, pg. 17). It can be seen that OC is related to what the organization does to employees and what employees do to the organization as a result.

OC is composed of three psychological attachments that employees show toward organization: desire (affective commitment), need (continuance commitment), and obligation (normative commitment) (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Abasilim, Gberevbie, & Osibanjo, 2019). These three types were first introduced by Meyer and Allen (1991).

Affective commitment. This is a feeling of attachment that employees experience toward an organization based on their sole "desire". Affective commitment happens when employees belong to an

organization specifically because they "want to".

Continuance commitment. This is a feeling of attachment that employees experience toward an organization based on "need". Continuance commitment happens because employees put a lot on stake and cannot afford to lose the job unless they find another "alternative" such as finding a better job or being recruited by what they consider as a better organization.

Normative commitment. This is a feeling of attachment that employees experience toward an organization because they have to or are "obliged". Normative commitment happens or often develops before employees join an organization because of personal reasons and continue to develop after employees join the organization as the result of the contributions or rewards that the organization may have given to the employees. In other words, employees chose to be committed not because they "want to" but because they "ought to".

Briefly, affective commitment is employees' own desire to stay in the organization based on their personal feelings of attachment; continuance commitment is employees' choice to stay with the organization because it costs them greatly if they leave the organization; normative commitment is employees' choice to be committed to the organization because of the feeling of responsibility (Khalid, et.al., 2015). When employees are committed to the organization where they work, they will remain within the organization, put

strong effort, and strive to reach its goal (Abasilim, Gberevbie, & Osibanjo, 2019).

There are several things an organization can do to improve OC-particularly normative and affective commitment and increase employees' desire to stay within the organization:

1. By providing constant learning (Khalid, et.al., 2015)
2. By letting employees be independent in their careers (Bambacas, 2010)
3. By giving appropriate reward and recognition (McElroy, Morrow, Liu, & Weng, 2010)
4. By enhancing ER (Khalid, et.al., 2015)
5. By ensuring a healthy and positive working environment (Cho, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006)

These factors are proven to significantly affect commitment because according to Eddleston (2009), employees are more likely to compare their cost and reward with each other, which affects their commitment toward the organization.

Propositions and Conceptual Framework

Organizational Justice and Employee Relations

Research proved that OJ relates to employee relations. Sahoo and Sahoo (2018) supported this fact on their research and found that OJ was positively and significantly related to ER. According to the authors, high OJ led to a more earnest employer-employee relationship. Justice/fairness in work schedule and promotion cause improvement in ER. Cropanzano, et.al. (2002), Forret and Sue Love (2008), and Fein, et.al. (2013) found similar results; the authors stated that OJ initiated effective work performance and

enhanced employer-employee relations as well as employee-co-workers relations. Moreover, OJ was proved to be one of the most influencing factors to affect ER and create employee's feelings of belonging toward the organization (Poon, 2012); OJ also contributes many significant effects on employer-employee relations (Kim, et.al., 2017). The relationship between OJ and ER is best described through the Social Exchange Theory (SET). Blau (1964) was the first to promote SET and defined SET as "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others" (p. 91). Based on the point of view of this theory, the relationship between OJ and ER is applicable when justice/fairness that an organization or employer shows can initiate positive relationships between employer, employee, and co-worker. If employees feel that they are being treated fairly, they will be motivated to support the organization, employer, and co-workers. In other words, the precise implementation of OJ can lead to positive ER. Blau furthermore explained that the *exchange* that happens between employer and employee can produce mutual trust and close friendly relationships. Whenever employees are treated fairly, it will improve trust toward employers and strengthen employer-employee relations.

The relationship between OJ and ER is interrelated. This relationship is built on trust, respect, and fairness. It is crucial to build a relationship on mutual trust; to treat each other with fairness and respect. These are the elements that should exist and become the foundation of employer-



employee relations to create a healthy and positive ER. Therefore, the first proposition of this study is:

Propositions 1: Organizational justice is positively related to employee relations

Organizational justice and organizational commitment

Organizational justice offers many benefits to employer-employee relations as well as to organizational success. Justice in the workplace can promote employees' long-term commitment (OC) to the organization. Fairness or justice in the procedure, decision-making, and outcomes greatly affect employees' commitment and the higher the level of OJ, the higher the level of OC will be (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013). Therefore, if an organization wishes to improve or enhance employees' commitment, it should first improve and enhance OJ.

The relationship between OJ and OC is best described in Equity theory (ET). This theory is often used to determine how employees view fair treatments from managers/organizations and how perceptions about organizational justice connect to each other (Cho & Sai, 2012). Employees who experience or receive fair treatment from the organization are more likely to stay within the organization and help it to achieve its goal. Justice in the workplace can compel employees to cooperate with co-workers and leaders for the success of the organization. OJ makes employees view organizational success as their success and organizational goal as their own goal.

If seen from ET point of view, when employees feel that they are being treated fairly, they will feel satisfied (Zhang & Agarwal, 2009). The feelings of satisfaction will enhance their commitment toward the organization (Ohana, 2014; Swalhi, et.al. 2017). Fair rewards such as attention, care, and compliments that employers give to employees can make them feel valued and attached (committed) to the organization (Kular, et.al., 2008), hence, increase employees' OC (Cho, Laschinger, & Wong, 2006). However, OJ should be clearly stated in the organizational culture and policies as a way to increase employees' commitment (Khalid, et.al., 2015). Organization must strive to create a committed workplace as well as promotes and practices equity, respect, and acknowledgment toward employees' diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Based on the above explanation, the second proposition of this study is:

Proposition 2: Organizational justice is positively related to organizational commitment

Organizational commitment and employee relations

Research proved that OC relates to ER. Good and high OC indicates good and positive ER as OC reflects HRM practices of the organization (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, & Hasan, 2019). Employees choose to commit to an organization because the organization treats them well and because there is a good employer-employee and employee-co-workers relationship. Likewise, ER can improve because employees commit to their work,



responsibility, and organization. The relationship between OC and ER is an interdependency relationship. Commitment in the workplace can promote improvement, progress, and endurance (Awamleh, 1996) of the organization and the employees.

The role of ET in the relationship between OC and ER helps to illuminate the connection. ET suggests that to maintain equality, management should make sure that all workers receive equal rewards and give equal costs because inequality will result in problems (Adams, 1965). When employees are highly committed to the organization, it means that their relationship with the organization (employers) is positive; thus, they show high feelings of attachment to the organization and strive for success in reaching the organizational goal (Raju & Srivastava, 1994). They also show high productivity at work (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018) because they experience a good and positive relationship with their employers (Tansel & Gazioglu, 2014). Organizations can enhance OC by giving employees incentives and by motivating (Agarwala, 2003; Rodgers, 1995) or giving “proper appreciation” (Martini, et.al., 2020, pg. 8) equally to each employee.

OC is vital to help enhance ER because good ER will result in high OC as well as other aspects such as employee engagement, organizational performance (Tansel & Gazioglu, 2014), employee motivation, employee loyalty, and employee performance (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018). Besides, manager-employees relation highly affects OC. When employees feel that the manager respects

them, employees in return will show commitment to the manager (Korsgaard, Schweiger, Sapienza, 1995) who in this case is the representative of the organization (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994).

The fact that OC enhances ER can be seen through the relationship between leaders, supervisors, managers, and employees. For example, managers can show that they “value” their employees by giving compliments for employee’s achievement (Sawithri, Nishanthi, & Amarasinghe, 2017) or by giving rewards such as bonus fee, vacation fee, and so on. Therefore, the third proposition of this study is:

Proposition 3: Organizational commitment is positively related to employee relations

The mediating role of organizational commitment

Employer-employee relationships, employee-organization relationship, employee-co-workers, and line manager-senior management relationship are reflected in the quality of OC and in the mutual trust that each other shows (Stites & Michael, 2011; Sawithri, Nishanthi, & Amarasinghe, 2017). OC can strengthen the relationship between OJ and ER since high OJ results in high OC and high OC results in good ER. OC significantly relates to ER; if an organization practices fairness, trustworthiness, and equality, OC will improve and affects ER as well (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The effects greatly contribute to organizational success (Fornes, Rocco, & Wollard, 2008; Mowday, et.al., 1979; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).



The mediating role of OC on the relationship between OJ and ER is explained in AT. AT emphasizes that employer and employee have to show equal cooperation in order to avoid conflict. The cooperation here refers to employer and employee's responsibility to: 1) "Give up on one's desire to cheat or exploit cooperative partners" and 2) to "expect that others cooperate too" (Lopes, 2016, pg. 7). Cooperation can never happen without mutual commitment; thus, this theory suggests employer to share responsibilities and trust with employees because they possess knowledge and skills that employer/organization needs. In return, employer rewards employees for their contributions to achieve organizational success.

Good ER has to always be maintained. Organization has to be fair in decision-making, giving rewards, and giving chances to employees for them to participate in organizational events such as trainings, workshops, sports, etc. When the organization practices justice in the workplace, for example like showing fairness in work delegations, salary payment, work promotions, etc., employees will be more committed and attached to the work/organization (Cropanzano, Bowen, Gilliland, 2007; Colquitt, et.al., 2012; Ohana, 2014; Aryee, et.al., 2015) and it will lead to increase in employee engagement [improvement in ER] (Blader & Tyler, 2003).

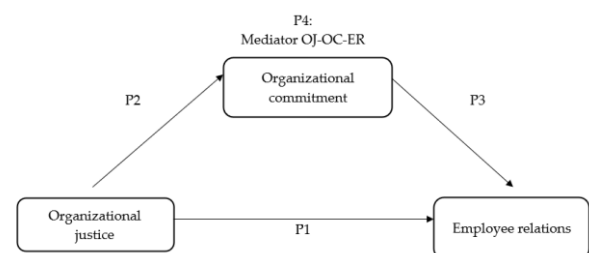
Employees who perceived that they are being treated fairly and are being given equal chances and rewards with other co-workers will more likely to commit to

their job and the organization. Employees will also have good perception about ER. In order to enhance, improve, or increase OC and ER, organization should show high OJ. For example, manager (employer) can compliment or appreciate employees for their job achievement; this can increase employee's OC and strengthen employer-employee relationship (Martini, et.al., 2020). Therefore, the last proposition of this study is:

Proposition 4: Organizational commitment positively mediates the relationship between organizational justice and employee relations

Proposed Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below shows the relationship between OJ and ER mediated by OC. OJ affects ER and OC while OC can affect ER. The mediating role of OC can strengthen or weaken the relationship between OJ and ER.



B. Methodology

This paper reviews several studies related to the topic employee relations (ER), organizational commitment (OC), and organizational justice (OJ). Related studies were found by using database such as SpringerLink, SAGE, Emerald, and Google Scholars. Based on the reviewed studies, this paper constructs four propositions and proposes a conceptual framework.

C. Discussion

OJ as the independent variable in this study can strengthen or weaken ER. If organization is reliable and trustworthy in its HR practices, organizational culture, and behavior, employees will feel satisfied with their job and will lead to a good relationship with their employers. As the mediating variable, OJ affects OC and OC affects ER. Even though there are still very few studies that use OC as a mediating variable on the relationship between OJ and ER, several other studies suggested OC as a mediator to see if its role can affect ER.

A study by Sahoo and Sahoo's (2018) proposed a theoretical framework on the relationship between ER (dependent variable) and its three predictors (independent variables): Organizational justice (OJ), employee empowerment (EE), and conflict management (CM). The result of this study showed that besides EE and CM, OJ also significantly affects ER by enhancing the relationship. The authors then conducted another study (Sahoo & Sahoo's, 2019) on the relationship between ER (dependent variable), OJ, and CM (independent variable) mediated by the climate of trust (CT). In this study, the authors concluded that ER is an essential factor to ensure organizational success. Therefore, to improve ER, organization should show fairness, effectiveness in managing workplace conflict, and capability to enhance trust between employer and employee. In both of these studies (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2018; Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019), the

authors suggested that for further research, researchers can find another mediating variable to mediate the relationship between OJ and ER; hence, this study uses OC as the mediating variable.

As already explained above, OC is highly effective for the organization and ER. According to Gill (2011), loyalty refers to long-term commitment. Employees show commitment to the organization by fully support and show pride to the organization (Pina e Cunha, 2002). Organization cannot possibly survive without employees. As agents, employees support organization by providing necessary contributions such as knowledge and skills that the organization needs to achieve its expected goal and to succeed. Therefore, ensuring OJ is imperative to boost employees' long-term commitment to the organization.

ER is not only affected by employer-employee relationship but also employer-organization and employee-co-workers relationship. Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, and Hasan (2019) believed that "to achieve corporate objectives and stay ahead of the competition, organizations strive to ensure a high level of commitment from its employees ... therefore, HR managers must make every effort in optimizing organization commitment of the employees" (pg. 1). Long-term commitment can be achieved if the organization trains and helps employees to learn their skills, empowers its employees (Storey, 2007), and gives proper rewards for employees' achievement and contribution/service (Absar, Azim, Balasundaram, & Akhter,



2010). If employees perceived that the cost they give is bigger than the reward they receive, they are more likely to lose interest to work in the organization and are more likely to experience increase in turnover intentions.

Rewards strongly affect OC; it can increase, decrease, or maintain OC (Malhotra, Budhwar, & Prowse, 2007). When employees perceived that the organization and their job are good, they will have high commitment toward the organization (Schalk & Roe, 2007). There was also a “strong positive impact” of “line manager and trust in senior management on employee commitment” (Sawithri, Nishanthi, & Amarasinghe, 2017, pg. 186) which indicates that ER significantly affects employees’ commitment to the organization. According to the authors, when employees believe that their senior management is reliable and practice fairness in decision-making, employees’ commitment will improve. The authors suggested that if organization wishes to improve and enhance OC, it has to make sure that ER in the organization is effective, healthy, and positive. Creating good quality ER can be achieved for example by “conducting events such as annual trips, annual sports-meet, providing sufficient resources and better working environment, and creating friendly working conditions” (pg. 187). It is the responsibility of the organization to ensure that employees are satisfied with their job through fair treatment and proper rewards. When there are equal cost and rewards, the organization can be

certain that employees’ OC is high and ER is strong.

Implication

Theoretical implication

This study proposes the relationship between OJ, OC, and ER as well as constructed conceptual framework on the relationships. The propositions in this study are based on reviewed literature that is used to give clear insights on the relationship between OJ and ER with OC as the mediator.

Practical implication

This study provides practical implications as follow:

1. Practitioners can use the literature and findings of this study to enhance the relationship between employer and employee, employee and co-workers, and employee and organization.
2. Practitioners can find insights for matters regarding ER, OJ, and/or OC in the literature provided in this study.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Studies similar to this are still limited; therefore, this paper can contribute to ER literature as well as to HRM. However, since this is a conceptual paper, there is a need to conduct an empirical study to test the propositions that this study developed. There is also a need to conduct a meta-analysis study to support the propositions. Further studies can also make use of more credible literature to strengthen the theories and support the references used in this study.



D. Conclusions

This paper reviews several studies on the topic of employee relations, organizational commitment, and organizational justice to find the relationships between the three topics. The literature used in this study was mostly found by using a database such as SpringerLink, SAGE, ResearchGate, and Emerald. The focus of this paper is to develop propositions and constructs a conceptual framework on the relationship between organizational justice and employee relations mediated by organizational commitment.

There are three theories used in this study to draw the relationship between 1) Organizational justice and employee relations (Social Exchange theory), 2) organizational justice and organizational commitment (Equity theory), 3) organizational commitment and employee relations (Equity theory), and 4) organizational commitment as the mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and employee relations (Agency theory). Based on the theory and reviewed literature, this study proposed that 1) organizational justice is positively related to employee relations, 2) organizational justice is positively related to organizational commitment, 3) organizational commitment is positively related to employee relations, and 4) the relationship between organizational justice and employee relation is mediated by organizational commitment.

Based on the reviewed literature, organizational justice, and organizational commitment significantly and strongly

affect employee relations. Organizational commitment also strengthens the relationship between organizational justice and employee relations. Several studies strongly suggest organizations to enhance justice in the workplace to boost employees' commitment and strengthen employer-employee relations. There is also a need for an organization to give equal rewards to employees for their contribution and service since employees tend to compare their rewards with co-workers to see if they are being treated fairly.

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