

Organizational Justice and Trust Perceptions: A Comparison of Nurses in public and private hospitals

Mahboobeh Rajabi (1)
Zahra Esmaeli Abdar (2)
Leila Agoush (3)

(1) Health Services Management Research Center, Institute for Futures Studies in Health, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

(2) Alborz University of Medical Sciences, Karaj, Iran

(3) Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence:

Leila Agoush
Iran University of Medical Sciences,
Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Background: Hospital organizational environment influences nurses' behaviors, attitudes and work quality. Organizational justice and trust are important organizational factors which have significant effects on the organizational and individual work outcomes.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to investigate perceived organizational justice and organizational trust and their relationship in nurses of public and private hospitals in north of Iran and to compare these two groups of nurses.

Methods: The study population included 322 nurses working in six public and private hospitals selected through stratified and simple random sampling. Perceived organizational justice was assessed through Niehoff and Moorman questionnaire and Elonen et. al questionnaire was used to assess the perceived institutional trust.

Results: Perceived organizational justice and institutional trust of nurses in private hospitals were better than nurses in public hospitals. There was a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational justice and perceived institutional trust and this relationship was more significant in nurses of private hospitals. Organizational justice explained approximately 60% and 50% of the total variance of trust in respectively private and public hospitals. Among three dimensions of organizational justice, procedural justice had a greater relationship with institutional trust and it was a

better predictor of nurses' trust in comparison to distributive and interactional justice in both types of hospitals. Also nurses' perceptions of organizational justice and trust were not significantly different based on sex, age group, job tenure, employment status, and education level in both types of hospitals.

Conclusion: According to the results, in order to improve organizational trust, it is necessary that hospital managers develop organizational justice. In this way, the resulted positive individual and organizational outcomes can significantly affect the quality of nurses' services and patients' satisfaction.

Key words: Organizational justice, Institutional Trust, Nurses, public hospital, private hospital

Please cite this article as Rajabi M. et al. Organizational Justice and Trust Perceptions: A Comparison of Nurses in public and private hospitals. *World Family Medicine*. 2017; 15(8):205-211 DOI: 10.5742/MEWFM.2017.93078

Background

Nurses are the healthcare providers whose main duties are caring, disease prevention and health promotion of patients (1). Beside these clinical activities they have managerial activities for coordinating the unit's tasks and condition (2). Nurses are the most numerous members of medical care teams and as frontline health workers have the closest contact with patients (3). Therefore, the nurses' services have great effect on the quality of care, patients' satisfaction, shaping the image of hospital care in viewpoint of patients and hospital performance and effectiveness (1, 4). Many hospitals' managers have realized that the quality of nursing services is the key to their organization efficiency and effectiveness (5). So hospital managers should pay special attention to these greatest parts of the care team.

Employees' attitude toward their jobs and organization is the most important factor that affects their productivity and performance and managers' behaviors affect employees' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (6, 7). Managers' fair treatment as one of the important and critical needs of employees in organization is crucial in shaping employees' attitudes because the norms and values of fairness make a critical trait of behavior in organizations (7, 8).

Organizational justice interprets the role of fairness in the workplace and the way employees determine they have been treated fairly and how these determinations influence their work related variables (9). Organizational justice has three distinct dimensions (distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice) which are related but differentially affect employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors (10). Distributive justice is based on the employees' perceptions of fairness of outcomes due to their input and in comparison to their peers within an organization (11). Distributive justice includes different organizational factors such as promotions, rewards, work schedules, shift assignments, performance evaluations and punishments (12). Procedural justice relates to employees' perceptions of fairness of the methods and processes which are used to make decisions like payment, reward, promotion, evaluation, disciplinary actions etc. in the organization (13). Having stronger procedural justice perceptions, the procedures are necessary to be consistent across time and persons, bias suppression, accurate, correct, ethical and representative of employees' need (14). Interactional justice as the third dimension of organizational justice refers to employees' fairness perceptions of interpersonal treatment of managers in the organization. Interactional justice reflects the politeness, honesty, respect, dignity and sensitivity of authorities' treatment toward individuals in their interactions, decision making and outcomes allocation (15, 16, 17). Employees' perceptions of justice relate to important individual and organizational consequences like job performance, citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, evaluation of supervisor, commitment and conflict solving (18). Nevertheless some studies showed employees' perceptions of injustice caused negative personal issues like psychiatric disorders, sickness

absence and poor self-rated health status and negative organizational issues like low levels of commitment, satisfaction and productivity, weak cooperation, turn over, anti-normative behaviors, disharmony and tension-stress (18, 19, 20, 21). As organizational justice is essential for impressive management and is a key variable to improve effectiveness in an organization and predict its success (14). managers should be sensitive to the factors that affect their employees' justice perceptions.

Studies showed one of the employees' attitudes that was affected by perceptions of fairness in organization is trust. The history of trust issue refers to the creation of earliest human society. Trust is the basis and requirement of all social relationships like organizational relations (22). Trust is mostly considered as a singular construct but it affects the organizational performance, procedures and structures in social or organizational context which makes it a complicated multidimensional construct. Trust as a part of organizational culture and values reflects in different behaviors of employees (23). So organizational trust is essential for creating an effective organization.

Different scholars have looked differently at trust concept and provide different definitions for it. For example Mayer et al define trust as "the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (24). However, some key words constantly appear in the most of scholars' definitions that are belief, willingness and vulnerability (25). Trust takes shape at different level in organizations and the trust referent can be an individual, group, organization or system. Trust can be established between the employee and both the supervisor and the organization (26). Organizational trust includes both interpersonal and impersonal trust. Interpersonal trust contains horizontal and vertical factors. Horizontal trust refers to trust between co-workers and vertical trust refers to trust between employees and their supervisor or managers. Organizational trust also includes systematic trust, when employees feel confidence toward the organizational system and functions. This impersonal dimension of trust is often named as institutional trust (27). Institutional trust basis is the organization's roles, systems and reputation (28). It defines trust of employees on different aspects of organization, such as strategy, vision, procedures, communication, human resources, practices and technological and commercial ability (27).

Researchers found that trust, as an important component of professional life, has different consequences for both employees and organization. Trust can predict employees' reactions, behaviors and performance. It also has a great role in various organizational processes and outcomes such as organizational commitment, commitment to leaders' decisions, organizational citizenship behaviors, job performance, innovation, problem solving, long term stability, managing organizational dynamics, promote cooperation between employees and organizations, reducing the rate of resignation and turnover, organizational

health and productivity and well-being of their members, (27, 29; 30 31, 32, 33, 34, 35). Organizational factors such as structure, human resource policies, procedures and organizational culture affect employees' trust (36). So organizational factors should be considered by managers because they can use them to enhance trust perceptions. For example, improving the work environment in a way that inspires fair and safe system structures can increase employees' trust in management(37).

Employees constantly monitor the activities of their organization to know if they should trust their organization or not (3). So if the process of payment and resource allocation, decision making, interpersonal interaction and leadership are considered to be fair in their point of view they would know their organization and their manager deserve their trust. Institute of Medicine (IOM) also has emphasized enhancement of working relationships and trust, clear and respectful communication and teamwork to improve quality of care (38). So hospital managers should determine their employees' level of justice perceptions and trust and try to eliminate the factors that cause the perceptions of injustice which can lead to mistrust perceptions in an organization.

Objectives

The work condition can be different in private and public hospitals which can affect the employees' attitudes in various ways. Therefore, in the current study we investigated the phenomenon of organizational justice and institutional trust perceptions among nurses in private and public hospitals; the way organizational justice dimensions affect nurses' trust and the power of organizational justice in predicting institutional trust.

Methods

1. Setting and sample

This cross-sectional study was performed among nurses of 3 private and 3 public hospitals affiliated to Rasht University of Medical Sciences, Iran. Among nurses of these hospitals 322 were captured by the Cochran formula. To determine the sample size in each hospital and select nurses of each unit for answering the questionnaires stratified sampling and simple random sampling were used.

2. Study instruments and data collection

Three dimensions of organizational justice (distributive, interactional, procedural justice) were measured by Moorman and Nihouf on a five grade Likert scoring questionnaire. For assessing institutional trust, Ellonen et al (2008) questionnaire in a five-grade likert scoring system was used (27). This questionnaire, with a few modifications, was adapted from trustee's characteristics, which Mayer et al (1995) and McKnight et al (2002) have mentioned (24, 39). Institutional trust dimensions included situational normality, vision, strategy, communication, and structural assurance. The questionnaire's reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha, 89% for organizational justice and 86% for institutional trust.

3. Ethical Considerations

The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

4. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, Chi-Square test and Multiple Linear Regression) through IBM-SPSS 19 and level of significance was set to 0.05.

Results

Most nurses were female, between 20-30 years old and had less than 10 years job tenure. About 98% of them had bachelor degree and 55.28% were contractually employed (Table 1). Mean score of organizational justice perceptions of private hospitals' nurses was 3.27 (out of 5) and mean score of organizational justice perceptions of public hospitals' nurses was 3.08 (out of 5). Among the three dimensions of organizational justice the highest mean score referred to interactional justice in both public and private hospitals. The mean score of organizational justice perceptions showed that nurses slightly agreed with organizational justice. Mean score of institutional trust perceptions of nurses of private and public hospitals were 3.08 and 2.88 (out of 5) (Table 2). The findings showed there was a significant positive relationship between organizational justice and its dimensions with institutional trust ($P < 0.05$). Also procedural justice was more strongly and positively related to institutional trust (Table 3). According to the Multiple Linear regression results organizational justice was significant predictors of institutional trust although its power was different in public and private hospitals. Organizational justice explained approximately 60% of the total variance of institutional trust in private hospitals and about 50% in public hospitals.

In public hospitals three dimension of organizational justice could predict the institutional trust but in private hospitals only distributive and procedural justice had the power of institutional trust prediction so interactional justice was omitted from the model. Procedural justice had stronger predictive power for institutional trust than did distributive and interactional justice in both types of hospitals (Table 4).

Also there were no differences between sex, age, job tenure, educational level and employment status in Nurses' perceptions of organizational justice and trust of nurse in private and public hospitals ($P > 0.05$).

Table 1: Demographic and professional characteristics of nurses

Demographic characteristics (n=322)	Frequency N (%)
Gender	
Female	290 (90.1)
Male	32 (9.9)
Age (year)	
20-30	125 (38.8)
31-40	113 (35.1)
41-50	75 (23.3)
> 51	9 (2.8)
Educational level	
Bachelor	315 (97.83)
Master	7 (2.17)
Length of employment (year)	
< 5	115 (35.7)
6-10	115 (35.7)
11-15	46 (14.3)
16-20	24 (7.5)
21-25	12 (3.7)
> 26	10 (3.1)
Employment Status	
Officially employed	144 (44.72)
Contractual employed	178 (55.28)

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of organizational justice and institutional trust

Hospital type	Variables	Mean	S.D
Public hospitals	Organization justice	3.08	0.77
	Distributive justice	2.43	0.84
	Procedural justice	3.18	0.85
	Interactional justice	3.62	1.07
	Institutional trust	2.88	0.9
Private hospitals	Organization justice	3.27	0.84
	Distributive justice	2.74	0.96
	Procedural justice	3.33	0.92
	Interactional justice	3.74	1
	Institutional trust	3.08	1.03

Table 3: Relationship between organizational justice and its components with institutional trust

Hospital type	variables	Institutional Trust	
		Pearson	
		R	P
Public hospitals	Organization justice	0.687	<0.001
	Distributive justice	0.529	<0.001
	Procedural justice	0.676	<0.001
	Interactional justice	0.537	<0.001
Private hospitals	Organization justice	0.761	<0.001
	Distributive justice	0.665	<0.001
	Procedural justice	0.706	<0.001
	Interactional justice	0.620	<0.001

Table 4: Regression components of organizational justice and institutional trust

Hospital type	variables	B	SE	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	P
Public hospitals	Distributive justice	0.23	0.07	0.71	0.50	0.49	0.001
	Procedural justice	0.40	0.10				0
	Interactional justice	0.18	0.07				0.028
Private hospitals	Distributive justice	0.41	0.07	0.78	0.61	0.60	0
	Procedural justice	0.33	0.11				0.002
	Interactional justice	0.14	0.09				0.120
Private hospitals	Distributive justice	0.39	0.07	0.77	0.60	0.60	0
	Procedural justice	0.45	0.07				0

Discussion

The results of this study indicated the mean score of organizational justice and institutional trust perceptions of nurses from private hospitals was more than nurses of public hospitals. The mean score comparison of organizational justice components showed the score of interactional justice is more than the score of procedural justice and distributive justice in both types of hospitals. Also consistent with some other studies our results showed organizational justice and all its three dimensions had a significant relationship with institutional trust (16, 40, 41) and organizational justice was a significant predictor of institutional trust in both types of hospitals. Among the three dimensions of organizational justice procedural justice was more strongly and positively related to institutional trust and had stronger predictive power for institutional trust in both types of hospitals.

Trust implies that justice perceptions could improve trust towards subordinates (42). Organizational structure, strategy, procedures and communications with employees influence employees' perceptions of trust (43, 44). So managers can engineer trust perceptions by actions and procedures that inspire a justice pattern of organization (45). If employees

believe in justice of organizational outcomes they will trust in management and their decision making (46). Procedural justice refers to the way that an organization manages the tasks, enacts policies and allocates the resources (18). Fairness of Procedures assures employees that each outcome is the result of a certain action regardless of individual opinions or organizational mistakes. This provides evidence of the leaders' consistency and integrity and helps reduce ambiguity (44). Procedural justice also reflects the respect of an organization for the rights and dignity of its employees (47). So procedural justice shows to employees that fairness is organization rule and they will recognize it is deserving of their trust (18). Researchers have demonstrated that procedural justice helps reduce the effects of unequal outcomes because the processes which are used to determine outcomes may be more important to an individual than the received outcomes. So if employees perceive fair procedures have been used in determining the outcomes they receive, trust in the leader and the organization will be affective (46). In this study procedural justice had the most influence of the three variables of organizational justice on institutional trust.

Interactional justice refers to the way that management behaves toward the employees and the quality of their interpersonal treatment and communication. Interactional

justice also determines the integrity and benevolence of management (15, 16). In this study mean score of interactional justice perceptions of nurses in both types of hospitals was highest among the three components of organizational justice which can describe the quality of management communication.

In the organizational theory and organizational behavior realm, organizational justice and trust are two of the essential concepts and practices in every organization. According to the results, the nurses' organizational justice perceptions could strengthen their institutional trust perceptions. So hospital management should try to improve nurses' organizational justice perceptions to enhance their organizational trust perceptions. They should plan to enhance fair perceptions of nurses by fair payment system, fair procedures and enough information about system procedures and suitable communication and behavior with staff.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all nurses who participated in our study for their kind cooperation. Also we appreciate Maryam Asadinejad, Sanaz Zoghtalab and Seid Mirmasoad Zakipoor for their sincere assistance.

References

1. Khan MH, Hassan R, Anwar S, Babar TS, Babar S. Patient Satisfaction with Nursing Care. *RMJ*. 2007; 32(1): 28-30.
2. Duffield M C, Roche MA, Blay N, Stasa H. Nursing unit managers, staff retention and the work environment. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 2010; 20: 23–33
3. Chen SY, Wu W, Chang CS, Lin CT, Kung JY, Weng HC, Y-T z Lin YT, Lee SL. Organizational justice, trust, and identification and their effects on organizational commitment in hospital nursing staff. *BMC Health Services Research*. 2015; 15:363.
4. Brown MP, Sturman MC, Simmering MJ. The benefits of staffing and paying more: The effects of staffing levels and wage practices for registered nurses on hospital's average lengths of stay [Electronic version]. 2002. Retrieved [insert date], from Cornell University, School of Hospitality Administration. Available at: <http://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/articles/296>.
5. Needleman J and Hassmiller S. The role of nurses in improving hospital quality and efficiency: Real-world results. *Health Affairs*. 2009; 28 (4): w625-w633.
6. Lundstrom T, Pugliese G, Bartley J, Cox J, Guither C. Organizational and environmental factors that affect worker health and safety and patient outcomes. *Am J Infect Control*. 2002; 30 (2): 93-106.
7. Greenberg J. Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management*. 1990b; 16 (2): 399-435.
8. Cropanzano R and Ambrose R. Procedural Justice and Work Motivation. In R. M. Steers and L.W. Porter (Eds.). 2001. *Motivation and Work Behavior* (5th Ed, PP. , 131-143.), NY: McGraw-Hill.
9. Bos K. 2001. Fundamental research by means of laboratory experiments is essential for a better understanding of organizational justice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 58: 254–259
10. Moorman, R. Citizenship behavior: Do fairness perceptions influence employee citizenship? *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1991; 76 (6): 845-855.
11. Folger R and Greenberg J. Procedural justice: An interpretive analysis of personnel systems. In K. Rowland & G. Ferris (Eds.), 1985. *Research in personnel and human resources management* (Vol. 3, pp. 141 – 183), Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
12. Lamber E. The impact of organizational justice on correctional staff. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 2003; 31:155– 168.
13. Cropanzano R and Greenberg J. Progress in organizational justice: Tunneling through the maze.1997. Chapter in C.L Cooper and I.T. Robertson (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational Psychology*, New York, John Wiley & Sons.
14. Colquitt JA, Greenberg J, Zapata-Phelan C. P. What is organisational justice: A Historical Overview. 2005. In J. Greenberg, & J. Colquitt (Eds.), *Handbook of organisational Justice* (pp 3-59). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Publishers..
15. Williamson K and Williams K. 2011. Organisational justice, trust and perceptions of fairness in the implementation of agenda for change. *Radiography* 17: 61-66.
16. De Coninck J. The effect of organizational justice, perceived organizational support, and perceived supervisor support on marketing employees' level of trust. *Journal of Business Research*. 2010; 63: 1349–1355.
17. Colquitt JA, Conlon DE, Wesson JM, Porter CH. O.L.H and Yee Ng K. 2001. Justice at the Millennium: A Meta-Analytic review of 25 years of Justice Research. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85 (3): 425-445.
18. Cohen-Charash Y and Spector P. The Role of Justice in Organizations: A Meta-Analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 2001; 86 (2): 278–321.
19. McFarlin DB, Sweeney PD. Distributive and procedural justice as predictors of satisfaction with personal and organizational outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*. 1992; 35(3): 626–637.
20. Alexander S and Ruderman M. The role of procedural and distributive justice in organizational behavior. *Social Justice Research*. 1987; 2: 177-198.
21. Elovainio M, Kivimäki M, Vahtera J. Organizational Justice: Evidence of a New Psychosocial Predictor of Health. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2002; 92 (1): 105-108.
22. Hassan M. and Semerciöz F. Trust in personal and impersonal forms its antecedents and consequences: A conceptual analysis within organizational context. *International Journal of Management & Information Systems – Second Quarter*. 2010; 14(2): 67-84.
23. Phillips C. The trust deficit: it started long before the scandals. 2004. The fielding graduate institute. Leadership 4 Change Consulting Group, LLC.

24. Mayer RC, Davis JH, Schoorman FD. An integrative model of organizational trust, *Academy of Management Review*. 1995; 20 (3): 709-734.
25. Mishra AK. Organizational response to crisis: The centrality of trust. 1996 . In R. M. Kramer and T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research*, (PP, 261-287). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
26. Whitener EM. The impact of human resources on employee trust. *Human Resources Management Review*. 1997; 7 (4): 389-404.
27. Ellonen R, Blomqvist K and Puumalainen K. The role of trust in organizational innovativeness. *European Journal of Innovation Management*. 2008; 11 (2):160-181.
28. Atkinson S and Butcher D. Trust in managerial relationships. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 2003; 18(4): 282-304.
29. Colquitt JA, Scott BA, Le Pine JA. 2007. Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: A meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92 (4): 909-927.
30. Callaway P. The relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction: an analysis in the U.S federal work force. 2007. Boca Raton, Florida.
31. Robbins SP. *The truth About Managing People*, 3th ED. 2013. Pearson education Inc, FT Press, New Jersey.
32. Frenkel S and Orlitzky M. Organizational trustworthiness and workplace labor productivity: Testing a new theory. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*. 2005; 43 (1): 34-51.
33. Dirks KT and Ferrin DL. Trust in leadership: Meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 2002; 87 (4): 611-628.
34. Folger R and Konovsky M. Effects of procedural and distributive justice on reactions to pay raise decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*. 1989; 32 (1): 115-130.
35. Serap A and Ulku B. Relationship between nurses' organizational trust levels and their organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 2010; 42(2): 186-94.
36. Whitener EM, Brodt SE, Korsgaard MA, Werner JM. Managers as initiators of trust: An exchange relationship framework for understanding managerial trustworthy behavior. *Academy of Management Review*, 1998; 23 (3): 513-530.
37. McKnight DH and Chervany N. What Builds System Troubleshooter Trust the Best: Experiential or Non-Experiential Factors? *Information Resources Management Journal*. 2005; 18(3), 30-47,
38. Page A. *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment of nurses*. 2004. Institute of medicine press. 500 Fifth Street, N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055; (800) 624-6242 or (202) 334-3313 (in the Washington metropolitan area). Available at: <http://nap.edu/10851>. DOI 10.17226/10851.
39. McKnight DH, Choudhury V, Kacmar C. Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology. *Information Systems Research*. 2002; 13 (3): 334-359.
40. Wong YT, Ngo HY, Wong CS. Perceived organizational justice, trust, and OCB: A study of Chinese workers in joint ventures and state-owned enterprises. *Journal of World Business*, 2006; 41: 344-355.
41. Aryee S, Budhwar P, Chen ZX. Trust as a mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes: test of a social exchange model. *J Organ Behav*, 2002; 23: 267-285.
42. Brockner J and Siegel P. 1996. Understanding the interaction between procedural and distributive justice: the role of trust. In: Kramer R, Tyler T, editors. *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research*, (pp. 390-413). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
43. Paliszkievicz JO. *Trust Management: Literature Review*. *Management*. 2011; 6(4): 315-331.
44. Burke CS, Sims DE, Lazzara EH and Salas E. 2007. Trust in leadership: A multi-level review and integration. *The Leadership Quarterly* 18: 606-632.
45. Greenberg J and Colquitt JA. *Handbook of organizational justice*. 2005. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, U.S.A.
46. Podsakoff PM, MacKenzie SB, Moorman RH, Fetter R (1990). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Leader Quarterly*, 1,(2): 107-142.
47. Konovsky MA and Pugh SD (1994). Citizenship behavior and exchange. *Acad Manage J*; 37(3): 656-69.