Organizational Justice: Unveiling Best Practice in the Hospitality Realm

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Abstract

Hotel organizations strive to foster and maintain high-quality relationships with its internal and external stakeholders. Internally, organizational justice is one of the vital components in human resources management to encourage employee's commitment. It is how employees perceive fairness in an organization through four subdimensions which are distributive, procedural, informational and interrelation. This study aims to explore the best practice of organizational justice in Malaysia hotel industry. Seven interviews were conducted with managers and directors of human resource from four- and five-stars hotels in central region of Malaysia. The majority on the hotels emphasized on procedural justice with plenty of fair practices and policies pertaining to employee's evaluation, training, reward system and leadership. Findings also reveal several practices related to interpersonal, informational, and distributive justice. This study provides guidance to managers on some of the best practice to instill justice within the organization.

Keywords:

Organizational justice, Hotel industry, Hospitality

1   Introduction

Employees are the heart of hospitality industry (Rogers, 2021). The success of business depends on competent employees and keeping employees loyal to the organization (Novitasari et al., 2020). One of the ways to foster an employee's commitment to the organization is by providing organizational justice and support for them especially from the employer (Novitasari et al., 2020). Organizational justice can be described as the evaluations of employees about the standing of managerial conduct in terms of morality and ethics (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Employees' perception on organizational justice is important as it influence employee's behaviour and attitudes (Silva & Caetano, 2014). Thus, potentially impact turnover intention, job satisfaction and work involvement (Agistiawati et al., 2020; Hutagalung et al., 2020; Sudiyono et al., 2020).

When employees sense that they are being treated with fairness, they will feel a part of the organization (Imamoglu et al., 2019). In the context of hospitality industry, employees are likely to provide quality service to customers when they are fairly treated by their organization and have a good relationship with their supervisor which, in turn, treat their customers well (Wang et al., 2023). Thus, organization must improve employee's perception of trust, satisfaction, commitment toward the organizations, thereby encourage positive service attitudes and behaviors toward external customers (Frye et al., 2020). This can be done by providing them with distributive, interpersonal and procedural justice perceptions (Bakoti & Bulog, 2021; Deconinck, 2010; Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2019; Kim et al., 2021; Singh & Singh, 2019). Nevertheless, as to date, the research on the types of organizational justice practice in the hospitality literature is still scarce. To address these research gaps, this study aims to explore the best practice of organizational justice in Malaysia hotel industry.

2   Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Justice

Organizational justice incorporates employees' perceptions of fairness within an organization, covering the methods used to distribute rewards and sanctions, which can include dismissals, training opportunities, promotions, transfers, trips and monetary aspects. Organizational justice plays a crucial role in cultivating positive exchange dynamics, such as leader-member relationships, organizational trust, and perceived support, all of which motivate employees to go above and beyond their formal job duties (Andrews et al., 2009). Colquitt & Rodell (2015) defined justice as the perceived compliance with rules that reflect appropriateness within decision contexts. Justice can be categorized into distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal forms (Colquitt, 2001). These four categories of justice will be discussed further in the following section.

2.1.1   Distributive justice

In a study conducted by Andrews at al., (2009) found that distributive justice pertains to how an organization's allocation and distribution of resources, such as promotions, compensations, and acknowledgement, are perceived in term of fairness. Another study defined distributive justice as the suitability of decision outcomes and involves the principles of fairness, parity, and necessity (Leventhal, 1976). Biswas et al., (2013) said that when employees receive proper recognition and rewards for their time and effort contributed to the organization, they will perceive distributive justice. In other words, the employees believe that they are getting a suitable benefit on their resource investment and fair distribution. Decisions related to distributive justice such as reward can impact organisational members' job satisfaction and turnover intentions. (Medina-Craven & Ostermeier, 2020). In the context of hotel industry, employees' view of fairness in the allocation of organisational outcomes leads them to become immersed, pleased, and dedicated to their organisation (Mensah et al., 2024).

2.1.2   Procedural justice

Procedural justice assesses the impartiality of an organization's procedures, ascertaining whether fair allocations and methods are utilized in resource-related decision-making process (Andrews et al., 2009). In another study, Thibaut & Walker (1975) defined procedural justice as signifying the appropriateness of decision-making processes. Other researchers explained procedural justice as pertaining to the fairness of the processes employed in decision-making (He et al., 2014). From the definitions above, procedural justice focuses on decision-making processes and the explanation of whether these processes are fair and transparent. Karkoulian et al., (2016) mentioned that the presence of procedural justice has a beneficial impact on the sustainability of the organization. Employees' understanding and acceptance of organization's decisions are heavily influenced by their view of procedural justice. When employees witness procedural justice in decision making, it will contribute to higher employees' effectiveness and better work performance (Khtatbeh et al., 2020).

2.1.3   Informational justice

Informational justice is the concept of fairness for individuals and communities in their roles as information seekers, providers, and subjects. In other words, informational justice is justice for persons as seekers of information (Mathiesen,2015). Informational justice pertains to the suitability of explanations provided for procedures and involves the principles of truthfulness and justification (Bies & Moag, 1986; Shapiro et al., 1994). When informational justice presents in organizational, employees have better acceptance and tolerance towards negative information or decisions, hence decreasing deviant behaviour in the workplace (Xu et al., 2023). Past studies have highlighted the implication of poor informational justice such as knowledge hiding behaviours and playing dumb (Ghani et al.,2020; Oubrich et al., 2020). Lack of transparency and poor timeliness of shared information not only impacted on personal level such as broken

trust and decreased morale, but also increase risk of misinformation, poor performance and resistance to change within the organizational members.

2.1.4   *Interpersonal justice*

Interpersonal justice is defined as the employee's sense of the authority's sensitivity and respectfulness of communications, which leads to the employee feeling appreciated by the organization (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg & Cropanzano, 1993). It measures the justice of interpersonal interactions (Bies, 2001). Employees are more likely to experience interactional justice if the management treats them fairly through processes (Lei et al., 2017). Any interpersonal justice system that would generate organizational commitment is frequently followed by treatment from the boss to praise, respect, and be polite in engaging with their employees (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2012). According to Holtz and Harold (2013), most employees regarded interpersonal justice as day-to-day, interpersonal encounters so common in organizations that interpersonal justice frequently becomes increasingly relevant and psychologically important to employees. When employees feel valued by organizational members, they are more likely to identify themselves as an important part of the company. Hence, suggesting that informational justice leads to low organizational turnover (Leineweber et al., 2020)

3   Methodology

3.1   Research design

This study employed exploratory research due to limited study focusing on the best practice of organizational justice especially in the hospitality industry. Qualitative approach through phenomenology research design deemed suitable to this study because it allowed the researchers to explore individuals' different views of organizational justice (Farghaly, 2018).

3.2   Selection of participants

Purposive sampling was utilized due to the decision that the samples limited to the study can provide relevant and sufficient input in terms of knowledge, experience, and perspective. Participants from this study consisted of hotel human resource (HR) managers or directors from four-stars or five-stars hotels in central region of Malaysia. To qualify for this study, the participants must be a permanent manager or director who have worked at least one year in the organization. Creswell (2007) recommends "long interviews with up to ten participants" for a phenomenological study, however majority qualitative studies generally follow the concept of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mweshi, 2020).

3.3   Instrumentation and procedure

For the purpose of detailed interpretation and rich data, this study will be using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were developed by the researchers based on the requirement of research

objectives. Some of the question asked include 'Can you describe any organization practices that HR implemented to ensure fairness when managing employee's welfare?', 'What is the employee's perception on policies carried out by the management?' 'How do you relate these practices (organizational justice) with employee's wellbeing?'. Probing questions were used when necessary to probe deeper and gauge in-depth responses. Prior to the data collection process, the researcher conducted familiarization interview with one of the hotel managers to identify issues in the items and enhance the trustworthiness of the instruments (Buschle et al., 2021). Interview protocol was also developed to ensure the interview process stays on track, maintain consistency across interviews with different informants, and increase reliability of the information.

3.4 Data Collection

To reach the potential informants, the researchers first contacted the HR departments from four- and five-star hotels to explain the purpose of the study and seek for their approval to participate in the study. Once agreed, the researcher arranged the interview via face-to-face or virtually as some informants were cautious with Coronavirus and Influenza A threat. All interviews were conducted in English language and were recorded with the informants' consent. Member checking was conducted with the informants to ensure consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of the data.

3.5 Data Analysis

The transcripts were reread thoroughly so that the researchers familiarized themselves with the data. Deductive analysis was conducted to categorize the initial data to predetermined codes or themes (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). The best practices of organizational justice were categorized into the four concepts of organizational justice, as proposed by Jerald Greenberg (1987).

4   Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Seven informants from four-stars and five stars hotels in central region of Malaysia participated in the study. Majority of the informants were male (57.10%) and aged thirty-one to forty years old (71.4%). All informants fulfilled the sample criteria set by the researcher as all informants have served more than one year with the current organization. The demographic profile of all informants is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

	n=7	Percentage
Gender		
Male	4	57.1
Female	3	42.9
Age		
≤30 years old	0	0

31-40 years old	5	71.4
41-50 years old	1	14.3
51-60 years old	1	14.3
≥61 years old		
Years of service		
1-3 years	2	28.57
4-6 years	2	28.57
7-10 years	2	28.57
≥11 years	1	14.30

Source: Researcher

4.2 Best practices of organizational justice

Four themes based on Greenberg's organizational justice were pre-determined which comprised of distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice.

4.2.1 Distributive justice

Practices related to distributive justice were highlighted by three informants who demonstrated that the management are very concern in ensuring employees received fair amount of value for their work outcome. M2 highlighted that the company practices fair incentives for employees who assist in reaching company's goal regardless their department and position.

Whenever the team achieved to reach the target, like One Million Ringgit revenue in the first five days of Ramadhan buffet, not just the sales or F&B team gets the incentive. Everyone involve will be given as well, kitchen staffs even stewards, cashiers, maids, everyone who are part of the successful event. But, of course the incentives for the operations will be slightly different from the sales team. Usually, double pay for their service during the event.

Meanwhile, M4 and M6 assured justice when it comes to work delegations and benefits provided. M4 mentioned that HR monitor the workload of each employee is closely to avoid dissatisfaction and burnout.

We monitor their work rate. We try to balance it out (work and outcome), so that they won't feel to stress out. But, sometimes they still have to work back to back, 7am-7pm. It's stressful, so usually we allow them to get extra rest day, equivalent to their work.

Additionally, M6 stated that department heads practice rotations in duty roaster and equal benefits across all employees.

There is no fixed roasters for operation staff. They will go through all of them (shifts) based on weekly rotation. Even the festive holidays, not the same staff will go for leave. They will rotate. And if they are dissatisfied with anything, we will try to explain.

All employees get the same benefits regardless your level or years of service. As long as you are confirmed (as staff), you will get the same annual leave, vacation benefits, medical benefits. If there is additional benefit, that is due to the nature of work like suit allowance for salesperson.

Fair share of company profits from combined efforts of management and operation is important as it is not only part of reward system but also directly related to empoyee's perception of organizational justice (Rai et al., 2019). When employees sense the organizational justice, it will promote employee well-being and reduce likelihood of turnover (Huong et al., 2016).

The hotel's fair benefits policy supported past studies which found that benefits influence perceptions on organizational justice (Tremblay et al., 2000). As a result, employees demonstrate positive organizational outcomes such as job performance, engagement, and turnover intentions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Employees evaluate organization not limited to overall benefits system only such as monetary, but specific offering such as job rotation can also constitutes employee's perception of fairness or unfairness (Laundon et al., 2019).

4.2.2   Procedural justice

In terms of procedural justice, all informants have pinpointed their best practice in respective organizations. Uniqueness of individual means it is important to know the background of each employee. By understanding the background of each employee, the management able to find the right approach to exploit their potential. M1 explained thorough background checks enable the management to get to know the employees.

From there (personal files), HR will be able to understand their challenges outside workplace. Sometimes, we try to accommodate benefits which may be extended to family members such as incentive for child first year at school or new family addition. There are also employees who have personal struggles at home like caring for the frail parents during the day. I mean, they are good employees so, we try to arrange their work shift according to their availability.

Meanwhile, M7 stated new employees will go through various test for the management to understand their strength.

We don't know much about them, so that's why we have personality test, competency test and EI test. That allows the HR to build employee's chart. It's like a career ladder chart for us to project their potential, monitor their progress. Employees are unique in their own way, so it's only fair we look at them individually.

Instead of test, M3 mentioned that the company's HR came out with modules to further understand their employees.

Three modules are given to the managers. First module is to understand about personality and learn to suits personality to the work. Second module is to understand

employee's background and learn to be more flexible to their needs. Third module is to take care of employees, learn to share problems and work together to solve the issues.

In contrast, M5 explained the importance to use personalize leadership style for different types of employees as part of embracing the workforce diversity.

Look, now we have like three different generations in our company. So different generations, age groups require different approaches. I don't believe in one leadership style fits all. Not only employees have to keep up with manager's leadership style, but the manager has to keep up with employee's strength as well. Task is given based on two-ways communication. It's not one-way, manager-staff relationship anymore.

Understanding employee's background has multifaceted approach. By understanding the background, the organizations can identify employee's strength, plan career trajectory based on employee's skills and aspirations and improve conflict resolution and employee's adaptability. Additionally, having a mix style of leadership is beneficial to the employees as employees have different needs and responses to various leadership styles. The leader's commands depend on the suitability of associates he or she supervise (Hajiali etal., 2022). At the end of the day, every leader has different ways to groom, encourage and direct the employees (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). Organization has also realized that different leadership is beneficial to navigate different situations effectively while maintaining harmonious workplace.

Fair training opportunities was also quoted as one of the procedural justices by two informants. M2 stated:

Training is provided to all level of employees including new employees and interns. Everyone is given chance to upskills regardless of their performance and level. It's not a benefit, it's a requirement for all.

M7 also supported:

We look at each (career ladder) chart, we identify their potential and find suitable opportunities like training for each of them.

Training has been part of organization benefits for a long time. Particularly in the hospitality industry, training is a vital component in HR because of the high costs associated with employee turnover (Jaworski et al., 2018). However, the provision of training has evolved. Previously, training was seen as reward to high performer but now, training is considered as necessity to all employees. Current hospitality organizations exercise fair opportunities for all employees to upskills. Organizations are also concern on types of trainings which deem suitable for the employee's career trajectory. Provision of effective training will improve employee's performance and promote employee's engagement with the organization. (Sendawula et al., 2018)

Understanding the onboarding process can be overwhelming for new employees, M2 explained measures taken by the management to facilitates new employees to settle in quickly.

New employees usually need helps to settle-in, but it has to be fast especially at the operation side. So, what we did is we created mentor-mentee program where one senior employee will be partnered with one new employee. Not only it will encourage fast learning process and adaptation to new environment, work system but it also allows new employees to share their problems with their mentors. Because, you know, new employees they are more comfortable with colleagues than department head or HR.

In terms of employee's evaluation, M3 highlighted a transformed performance appraisal process to better suited with the current workforce.

Not the traditional top-down appraisal, that's long gone. Nowadays, we use 360 evaluations. That means the evaluation will come from your boss, your colleague, subordinates from other departments and clients. So, you must be good to everyone, not just your boss.

When we talk about KPI evaluation, it's not about what the employees have done right or wrong to reach the target. But, the focus will be on the reflection of performance from employee's perspective, not from the boss. Employees will be asked how they feel about certain task, ideas to improve, challenges, then set future KPI. And when we want to set the KPI, it is based on discussion with the employee herself. It is not solely set by the boss.

Most organizations have transformed its performance appraisal methods as employees appreciate more frequent, transparent and direct feedback for their performance (Inamdar, 2022). As such, two-ways communication plays important role in setting goals and discussing employee's performance. Not only employees value feedback on current performance from the eyes of all stakeholders (co-workers, managers and customers), but employees also appreciate being heard in terms of providing inputs on how to improve business performance.

Even though rules and policies are important part of managing employees, several informants consider flexibility when implementing rules or policies especially after COVID-19. M4 stated the company allows flexibility when it comes to leave.

The employees deal with a lot of personal issues especially during the pandemic. So, HR allow them to take leave to solve their problems. If it's still not solved, we allow long personal leave like unpaid leave. Solve your problem and come back to work feeling better.

This is supported by M5 as well, whereby the company has revised certain policies and benefits to inject flexibility.

Employees can take short time off from work to settle family matters and come back to work. And previously, we only allow employees to go to our panel clinic. But now, with so many viruses and diseases, they can go to any clinic and claim.

Additionally, M6 said flexibility is practice by looking at case by case.

We try to adjust here and there (policies and rules) to assist employees by looking at case by case. Always give and take with employees because they have sticked with the hotels through MCO, EMCO, CMCO (lockdowns during COVID19 pandemic).

For a long time, flexible work practice is consider a valuable workplace tools to facilitate work life management for employees. Employees view workplace flexibility as important factor before joining an organization, job satisfaction, and intention to stay (Richman et al., 2008)

4.2.3   Interpersonal justice

Interpersonal justice is widely practice by the organizations. Half of the informants initiated open door policy which allows employees to reach out to HR department or the top management at any time. M1 said:

HR allow employees to express their grievances at all levels. Then, HR will take prompt action to solve the problem without taking sides of managers or lower-level employees. Not just work-related matters, but employees are also welcome to share their personal problems and seek advice or counselling.

This is further supported by M2 who stated:

Our door is always open for the staff to share work and personal problems. We are there for the staff for any problems; financial, addiction, marital. HR have wide networks to assist employee's personal problem like AKDK (The Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency).

M4 corroborated by highlighting:

Yeah, everyone is welcome to HR for any issues. Or they can also drop complains in our google form anonymously. We will look it up.

The management realized the reluctancy of some employees to visit HR office as they do not want to be seen as complainers. Thus, several informants initiate different approach to check on the employees. M1 said the HR used walkabout approach as explained:

HR doesn't wait for employees to come to the office and vent their frustrations. Sometimes employees are afraid to be seen in HR office or sometimes they are too busy to find time to see HR. So, what we do is, we conduct walkabout to every department to know how everyone is doing. So, our employees here, they feel closely connected to HR as HR show genuine concern for the issues by coming to operation side.

On the other hand, M2 mentioned that the hotel practice daily check on employees over lunch meals.

It all started from the GM. He will have lunch with one or two staffs from various departments. The purpose is to explore any issues within the department or personal problems. Now, he encourages all HODs to do the same with their departmental staffs whenever they are free. Be it at the coffee house or outside restaurants, the lunch will be borne by the company.

Majority of hotel managers show genuine concern on employee's problems regardless related to work or not. Open-door policy is widely practice eliminating the

traditional look of HR where it is always seen as unfriendly, fearful department among employees. Additionally, the support for employees is also seen beyond the HR office and helps are offered beyond the scope of HR. Nowadays, HR is easier to reach and communicate compared to old days. The responsibility of looking after employees also does not falls under the shoulder of HR alone, but all top management.

M7 stated that the company engaged with a counselor to assist with matters the that employees reluctant to share with the company.

While we encourage staff to express anything that is bothering them, there are things where…. The staff are shy or reluctant to share with the company. Things like debt, marital problem. So, we have third-party counselor who will come a week apart to hear them, advice.

Additionally, M1 also mentioned extra attention are given to employees with special needs to ensure they are coping well with the work and no issues with discrimination.

We have a few special needs employees at both management and operation side. One who are approaching 70 years old, one learning disabilities (dysgraphia), and one with weak limb. They all can still work because their disabilities don't interfere with the work given. But still, we regularly check on them to make sure they can cope with the work and not being discriminated.

To further solidified support to employees, some organizations also engage with third party to assist employees such as counselling service. Majority of organizations also have diversified workforce which consists of employees from various background. Thus, managements also practice extra care on employees with disability. Equal treatment to all employees regardless their background promotes employee's perception on organizational justice (Berger et al., 2010)

4.2.4   Informational justice

In terms of informational justice, all informants agreed that direct and transparent communication is important for employees. These statements from several informants support the claim:

Staff can easily see the Director or General Manager directly.

We welcome employee's feedback in decision making pertaining to benefits or policies.

We believe that strong relationship stem from good communication, so data (revenue or loss) is making public to every employee. Usually, if we want to announce any news or disseminate information to all employees, we do it through townhall or department meetings. As much as technology is fast and facilitating, we prefer to do it face-to-face to ensure all employees understand, do not miss out and prevent misunderstanding. When the process is personalized (face-to-face), it helps to build trust and we can simultaneously get feedback from the employees.

The informational aspect of justice refers to the sharing of adequate information on procedures to employees and explaining the rationale of outcome distribution and decisions using proper procedures, accuracy and timeliness. Satisfaction with organizational communication can reduce conflict, improve overall satisfaction and trust (Chio et al., 2004), and promote positive justice perceptions among employees (Gupta & Kumar, 2009). Fair procedure can be an instrument used to deliver the message that employees valued (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Communicating accurate information and transparent policies also allow employees to concentrate on their work (Chan et al., 2017). Most of the hotel organizations practice direct and transparent communication with the employees which encourage employees to participate and collaborate in decision making. Downward communication is no longer a common practice as organizations realized that direct face-to-face communication help to foster trust and get instant feedback.

5   Conclusion

The revelation of OJ best practice in the hotel industry is valuable information for hotel long-term success. Intense competitions in labour market with other industries, high turnover ratio and limited sources of skilled hotel employees demonstrated the importance of implementing effective approach for OJ. This study highlighted the transformation in OJ practices in modern-day workplace.

Based on the four subdimension of organizational justice, procedural justice is the most frequent practice in the hotel industry. Employers no longer focus on the equality of one's reward (pay, benefits, and promotion) to one's input (efforts, educations, and experience) (Adams, 1965) in the organization but the OJ is extended individual characteristics and background. Traditional procedural justice which is commonly performance-oriented has been improved by taking account employee's strength, background, and feedback as well. The employers have better understanding that factors to employee's loyalty does not rely solely on monetary or non-monetary benefits, but the organizational culture and trust put into organization through fair procedures.

It is worth to highlight that managers' answers reflect to up-to-date OJ practice which suits with the current needs of employees. The changing trends in employee's expectation due to diversify labour market means the managers must be alert and review the organizational practice on interval basis. Not only it would help to attract recruitment, but it is important to support employees' sustainability which means promoting employee's loyalty that is influenced by organizational culture that supports and values employees.

6   About the author

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