

**MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE PERCEPTIONS IN THE LINK BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND TEACHER'S JOB SATISFACTION WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF BALOCHISTAN.**

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**Abstract**

*The aim of this study was to explore the mediating role of distributive and interactional justice perception as part of organizational justice perceptions in between servant leadership behavior and teacher's job satisfaction. The subjects for this study consisted of a convenient sample of 396 teachers from Universities of Balochistan, Pakistan. Results indicate that distributive and interactional justice significantly mediated the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Thus, one way via which servant leadership is related to job satisfaction is through its positive effects on organizational justice perceptions.*

**Key Words:** Organizational Justice, Leadership Behavior, Job Satisfaction, Higher Education, Balochistan.

**1. Introduction**

In today's challenging and competitive environment, the positive relationship between leader and follower is important. Institutional leaders who display destructive behaviors and consider their employee merely as production unit tend to produce unsatisfactory results (Yen, 2013). Within organizational settings, it is claimed that servant leadership (SL) is an important predictor of employee's satisfaction. In this regard, previous studies (e.g., Anderson, 2005; Miars 2004) have

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indicated inconsistent results regarding the relationship between SL and teachers' job satisfaction (JS). Such inconsistent findings provided the basis for the current study which primarily aims at investigating the mediating role of organizational justice (OJ) as a link between servant leadership behavior and job satisfaction of teachers. Servant leadership is basically the employee-oriented leadership style, consequently, employees are more prioritized than the organizational outcomes. Such behavior of leaders influence the perceptions of fairness among employees. OJ encompasses three dimensions (1) distributional justice that refers to the fairness of outcome (outcomes satisfaction), (2) procedural justice that refers to fairness of outcomes process (system satisfaction) and, (3) interactional justice that refers to employees' interactions with supervisor (relationship satisfaction). Although previous studies have well-documented the mediating role of OJ in the relationship between leaders behavior and several outcome variables (e.g., Ehrhart, 2004; Khajehpour, 2016; Mayer, 2008, Zehir, 2013), there is a paucity of research investigating the mediating role of OJ in the relationship between SL and teachers' JS in the context of Pakistani higher educational institutions.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Servant Leadership**

This concept presented the incorporation of two opposite words 'leader' and 'servant'. (Green Leaf, 1970), presented this concept after being inspired from one of the characters in the novel 'Journey to the East' by Hermann Hesse. His concept of first 'serve' then 'lead' drew the attention of researchers in the business world. The proponents of SL prioritize the needs of their followers over their own needs and actively help their subordinates grow and succeed in attaining organizational goals and career success (Greenleaf, 1977). The literature of SL

comprises numerous sets of dimensions that describe this concept. (Laub, 1999, Liden, 2008; Patterson, 2003, Spears, 1995).

Liden et al. (2008) conceptualized SL as composed of seven dimensions: (1) emotional healing refers to the act of showing concern to others' feelings and emotions; (2) creating value for the community embodies the genuine efforts taken in an attempt to help the community; (3) conceptual skills refer to first-hand knowledge of organizations and using it to help its immediate followers; (4) empowering refers to acting or facilitating others especially in terms of carrying out the assigned tasks; (5) helping subordinates grow and succeed is a selfless act in which one tries to help others enhance their professional growth and development; (6) putting subordinate first is again a selfless act in which a boss prioritizes subordinates' needs to help them face the difficulties in certain tasks; finally (7) behaving ethically refers to employees being treated fairly and having their needs addressed with an acute honesty.

## **2.2 Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction refers to one's sentiments/attitudes positively or negatively related to one's job. (Sunal, Sunal, & Yasin, 2011). JS denotes how well one's job addresses one's needs. It is established that JS affects individual's productivity in any workplace. Similarly, in educational institutions, it seems likely that educational excellence is linked with teacher's JS. Teachers with higher levels of JS are more likely to perform well in more challenging situations (Hean & Garrett, 2001).

## **2.3 Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction**

Plethora of researches have attempted to explore the antecedents of teacher's JS and/or dissatisfaction. (e.g., Russell et al., 2010; Stockard et al., 2004). Bogler (2001) and Miers (2004)

revealed that leaders' behavior significantly impacts employees' JS. Likewise, various studies have well-documented the relative influence of different leadership styles on JS (Akdogan, 2002; Griffith, 2004; Stockard and Lehman, 2004). However, there is dearth of studies that have investigated the interrelationship between SL and JS via mediating variables. Specifically, to our knowledge, to date, none of the studies has examined the mediating role of OJ perceptions in the SL-JS relationship.

#### **2.4 Organizational Justice**

The previous researches have well documented the importance of organizational justice and its impact on the outcome behavior of employees. Rawls (1971) revealed that justice is the prime entity of social institutions. He considered the justice as a 'first value'. (Rawl, 1971). Similarly, according to the Greenberg (1990), early theories of social justice simply expected at trying the principles of justice in social interactions (Greenberg, 1990). Therefore, all those theories attained limited achievement in explanation of organizational behaviors. Later on, conceptual models have been formulated to deliberate these theories of fairness in connection to the characteristics of organizational role. Therefore, all these models have also enabled researchers to describe the role of justice within the organizational settings (Greenberg, 1987)

To judge the justice criteria in the organizational settings, Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton (1992) illustrated two principles primarily to judge if the organizational justice exists or not. First principle, is Balance. Where an individual involves arbitrating the justice of the decision linking with other such results in the similar situations. Second principle is Correctness. Which specifies the excellence that poses in the decision to seem right. For the core principles of justice in decisions, both balance and correctness are well-thought-out.

Moreover, fairness perceptions refers to the individual's work rewards for the given responsibilities and procedures used for such outcomes (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). They specified that previous studies on justice perceptions have focused on two main issues. First, the employees' response to the outcomes they received. Second, the procedures used for deciding such rewards.

The concept of individual's reaction towards the outcome compared to her/his contribution was initially devised by Equity theory (Adams, 1965). The expectations of outcomes against one's services are analyzed and compared with other coworkers outcomes; the concept received ample courtesy. Later on, the focus of researchers shifted from the fairness of outcomes to the procedures used for devising such outcomes. In other words, the process used to attain such outcomes are more dynamic than to only gain those outcomes (Christopher L. Martin & Bennett, 1996).

### **2.5 Organizational Justice as a Mediator**

OJ encompasses distributional, procedural, information, and interpersonal justice. Both information justice and interpersonal justice are combined and categorized as interactional justice by Moorman (1991). Moreover, constructs of justice have their role in influencing individual's perception of fairness, although one's reaction may differ either focus on outcomes or outcomes process (Schminke et al., 1997).

Distributive justice is perceived impartiality in the dispersal of outcomes in the organization (Greenberg, 1990). The fairness in the distribution of outcomes can be understood through employee's pay, rewards, outcomes of dispute resolution and promotions (Colquitt et al. 2005). Additionally, procedural justice is linked with distributive justice and indicates the fairness

of decisions made in favor of employees (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). To ensure fairness in decisions, organizations often include employees in decision making procedures so that they may be acquainted with the reasons behind actual outcomes (Colquitt et al. 2005). This act of interaction between employee and the person in charge of the decision-making process is reckoned as interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt et al. 2005; Greenberg, 1993).

Previous researches have also tested the mediating effect of OJ perceptions between SL behavior impact on OCB and Performance (Zehir et. Al. 2013). The findings of research by Khajehpour et al. (2016) clearly revealed the OJ and psychological empowerment both mediates the relationship between SL, OCB and Organizational Commitment; where SL serves as independent variable. However, the mediating role of organizational justice perception between the relationship of employees' SL and employee JS is not explored. To address the aforesaid research gap we hypothesize:

### **Hypothesis**

Organizational justice perception mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

## **3. Method**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The present study uses a quantitative research design to determine the mediating role of OJ in the relationship between SL and JS of university teachers. The current research did not require approval by ethic committee. However, prior to the administration of questionnaire, ethical permission was sought from the concerned public universities in Balochistan province of Pakistan. Additionally, the researcher also explained the nature

and purpose of the study to the participants. They were also assured that their names and responses would be confidential and would only be accessed by the one doing and supervising the study. The participants had sufficient time to respond to the questionnaires.

### **3.2 Participants**

The current study was carried out in Balochistan, one of the largest and least populated province of Pakistan. Seven universities agreed to participate in the survey. The survey includes teachers from all major fields of study. For the distribution, guidance for participant in case of any confusion or query resource persons appointed. All the resource persons were well versed in research methods and were well aware of the nature of the present study. The questionnaires were distributed to 450 university teachers with 396 returning the questionnaire, yielding 88% response rate. The average age of the participants was 38.2 years. Of the total number of participants, 38% were female teachers, and 62% were males. They responded to the questionnaires in the presence of the resource person assigned by the lead researcher. Twenty-one incomplete questionnaires were discarded from the final data analysis.

### **3.3 Measures**

SL was measured using 28-item close ended questionnaire developed by Liden et al. (2008). This measure aims at measuring SL in relation to its seven aspects: “Emotional healing”, “creating value for the community”, “conceptual skills”, “empowering”, “helping subordinates grow and succeed”, “putting subordinate first” and “behaving ethically”. Sample question of questionnaire is: “I would seek help from my head of department if I had a personal problem”.

The 20-item scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993) was used to measure OJ perceptions. The scale measures the three dimensions of OJ. Five items were used to measure distributive justice. Example includes “My work schedule is fair”.

The procedural justice was measured with six items. Example includes “Job decision are made by the Chairman/ Chairperson/ Director in an unbiased manner”). Interactional justice was measured with nine Items. Example includes “When decision is made about my job, my Head of Department treat me with kindness and considerations.”

Three items from Price and Mueller (1981) job satisfaction survey was used to measure the level of teachers’ job satisfaction. Sample item include “I find real enjoyment in my job”.

All the participants were required to respond to items on 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

### **3.4 Analysis**

Preacher & Hayes (2008) approach was used to test the mediation effects. Indirect effects were examined to test the mediating role of distributive, procedural and interactional justice between SL and teachers’ JS. Subsequently, bootstrapped confidence interval approximations of the indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) were calculated to determine the significance of the mediations. Estimating indirect effects via bootstrap method is recommended when the sample size is small to moderate (Shrout and Bolger, 2002). It is also considered a rule of thumb that the indirect effect is significant at  $p < .05$  in the social sciences, if the 95% CI do not comprise the value of zero. The conceptual model/ hypothesis was tested through SPSS

macros (Process version 3.1) of Preacher and Hayes (2008) by calculating the followings estimates: (1) Standardized paths from SL to OJ i.e. distributive, procedural and interactional justice, (2) Standardized paths from OJ (all three perceptions) to JS, (3) Standardized paths from SL to JS, (4) Total indirect effects, and (5) 95% CI for the indirect effect.

**4. Results**

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables are indicated in Table 1. SL revealed to be positively associated with OJ perceptions and JS.

*Table 1*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>I</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Servant Leadership</b>	4.6	1.4	0.98				
<b>2. Distributive Justice</b>	5	1.4	.366**	0.94			
<b>3. Procedural Justice</b>	4.6	1.4	.685**	.489**	0.94		
<b>4. Interactional Justice</b>	4.6	1.5	.714**	.410**	.795**	0.96	
<b>5. Job Satisfaction</b>	5.3	1.3	.463**	.541**	.525**	.521**	0.9

\*\*  $p < .01$ . Cronbach Alpha on diagonal.

The mediation model was tested to evaluate the association between the study variables (SL, OJ perceptions and JS). All estimated paths were significant except procedural justice and JS. As can be seen in figure (1), SL is positively related to distributive justice ( $\beta=.38, t=7.59, p<.01$ ), procedural justice ( $\beta=.73, t=18.16, p<.01$ ) and interactional justice ( $\beta=.78, t=19.69, p<.01$ ). Both distributive justice and interactional justice were significantly associated with JS;  $\beta=.34, t=7.94, p<.01$  and  $\beta=.18,$

$t=2.98, p <.01$ , respectively. However, procedural justice was not associated with JS ( $\beta=.09, t=1.47, p>.05$ ).

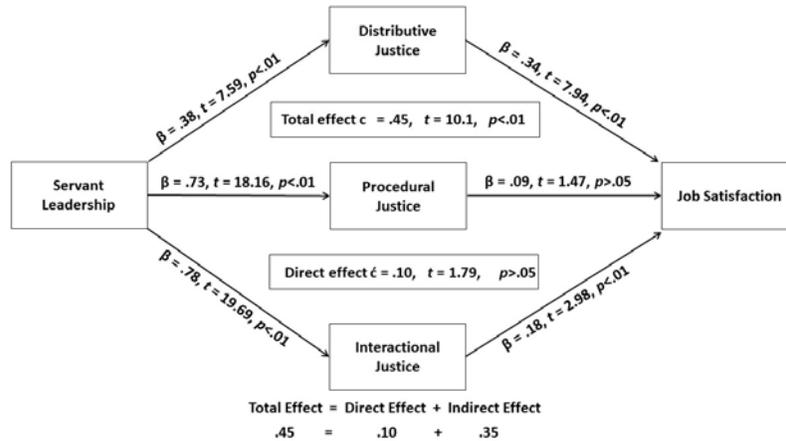


Figure 1.

According to Baron & Kenny’s (1986) approach, the total effect must decrease (or become non-significant) after introduction of mediating variables(s) in the model. In other words, the direct effect must be lower than the total effects. As can be seen in Figure 1, the direct effect ( $c'$ ) is  $.10(t=1.79, p>.05)$ , which indicate full mediation.

According to Preacher & Hayes (2008) indirect effect approach, the total effect of SL through distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice was significant, that is total indirect effect  $a \times b = .35$ , LL95CI (lower limit confidence interval)  $=.250$  and UL95CI (upper limit confidence interval) $=.465$ . Since 95%CI did not include zero in the interval, therefore we conclude that the total indirect effect of SL on JS through distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice was significantly different from zero.

However, post-hoc results indicate that both distributive justice and interactional justice significantly mediated the relationship between SL and JS; distributive justice (indirect effect=.131, LL95CI=.076, UL95CI=.198) and interactional justice (indirect effect=.149, LL95CI=.049, UL95CI=.262) whereas procedural justice failed to mediate the link between SL and JS; indirect effect=.071, LL95CI=-.029, UL95CI=.182.

## **5. Discussion**

The present study primarily aimed to test if employee's perceptions of OJ mediate the relation between SL and JS. The results of the correlation analysis indicated that SL is positively linked with all three constructs of OJ (procedural, distributive, and interactional justice) and JS. Additionally, distributive, procedural and interactional justice was positively associated with SL and JS. These results confirm the nomological net of the SL and OJ. To provide added evidence to the existing knowledge, the study investigated the mechanism through which SL affects teachers' JS via OJ perceptions. The current study reveals the role of SL in connection with OJ that has an impact on the teachers' JS in the higher educational institutions.

In this study SL is positively linked to teachers' JS. These findings compliment the previous researches (Afaq, Mushtaq & Adeel 2017; Khajepour, Yeganeh, and Hashemi 2016; Nel, et. al. 2015 and Jones, 2011). Additionally, these findings also establish the fact that leaders in educational institutions in Pakistan follow SL styles. Thus, they not only prioritize their employees' needs and interest but they also provide them support to grow and succeed. As a result, teachers are satisfied with the compassionate behavior of their leader. (Afaq, 2017; Drury, 2004; Laub, 1999).

Additionally, the study by Mayer, Bardes and Piccolo (2008) also lends support for the findings of the present study. Mayer's et al (2008) found that OJ perceptions mediated the link

between SL behaviors and followers need. When leaders exhibit SL attributes, employees perceives fairness in the distribution of resources and tend to be more satisfied (Khajehpour et al, 2016). The results of overall OJ, and specifically distributional justice and interactional justice are in line with previous studies. However, procedural justice perceptions did not mediate the link between SL and JS. Such results may exist because the correlation between procedural justice and interactional justice is high 0.79. According to Mansour-Cole and Scott (1998), the researchers who used Moorman's scale, due to high inter-correlations between the procedural and interactional justice scales, it is appropriate to use a uni-dimensional scale. In order to testify Mansour-Cole & Scott (1998) claim, both the procedural and interactional justice were combined into one scale. The results showed that both distributive justice and combined procedural & interactional justice significantly mediated the relationship between SL and JS; distributive justice (indirect effect=0.130, LL95CI=0.078, UL95CI=0.197) and procedural & interactional justice combined (indirect effect=0.218, LL95CI=0.114, UL95CI=0.329). As 95% CI do not include zero so the results showed that both distributive and composite measure of procedural and interactional justice (combined) mediated the SL-JS relationship. Thus, it is confirmed that in both the cases the OJ mediates the relationship between SL and JS.

### **5.1 Limitations and Suggestions**

First, this study was cross sectional in nature so the direction of causality cannot be established. Therefore, future studies are recommended to use longitudinal research design for confirmation (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). Second, the data was collected only from public sector Universities. It is because there is no private sector university in Balochistan province of Pakistan

except Al-Hamd University. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the private universities in general. Therefore, future studies are recommended to include both public and private universities with a justifiable ratio so that valid conclusions could be drawn. Third, as the use of non-probabilistic sampling (convenient sampling method) limits the generalizability of outcomes; therefore, future researchers may also decide their sample following probability-sampling procedures. Fourth, this study only focused on employees' JS and ignored their work-related outcomes that could provide better assessment. Therefore, future studies are recommended to check the mediation of SL with other work-related outcomes. Fifth, in the current study, the data were collected from teachers only, future studies are recommended to collect data from different sources i.e. supervisors and peers. Finally, the role of satisfaction may be investigated as a mediator between the relationship of SL and Job Performance in role (basic task performance) and extra role (OCB); In-addition, satisfaction could be effective mediator in between fairness perception and citizenship behavior.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the present study indicate that OJ perceptions mediate the relationship between SL and teachers' JS in higher educational setting. Training programs designed for the Head of the Departments directed at developing SL styles along with developing actions reflected in OJ perceptions might help to maximize the JS level of teaching faculty. It seems like a worthy area for future investigations.

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