

## The Effects of Organizational Justice on the Innovative Work Behavior of Employees: An Empirical Study from China

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### Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the impact of organizational justice in the form of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice on the innovative work behavior of the employees working in telecommunication sector of China. Data was collected from 235 employees and analyzed by using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results of these analyses suggested that all forms of organizational justice have a strong and positive impact on the innovative work behavior of the Chinese employees, particularly, spatial and temporal justice were found explaining highest variance in innovative work behavior of employees respectively. Lastly study implications are also discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** organizational justice, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, temporal justice, spatial justice, employee innovative work behavior, China.

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### Introduction

For matching up the competition, ensuring effectiveness and to absorb the dynamic change in current competitive market, organizations are increasingly relying on the innovativeness of their employees. This trend encouraged the organizational scholars to investigate those organizational factors that have a strong impact on the innovative work behavior of employees (Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall & Zhao, 2011). Further, no matter what organizational role one plays, he or she always needs to have fair treatment from the organization they are working for (Jakopec & Susanj, 2014; Shin, Du & Choi, 2015; Ouyang, Sang, Li & Peng, 2015). This requirement highlights the importance of organizational justice for the employees working in current knowledge era. Organizational justice is related with employees' perceptions of justice in the organization. It is basically the feelings of employees how fairly they are treated in the organization in a number of related and concerned matters. A number of studies investigated the "how" and "why" aspects while the determining the perceived fairness by the employees and its effects on their work related behaviors (Kerwin, Jordan & Turner, 2015). Studies has substantiated that positive fairness perceptions leads to positive behaviors and outcomes from employees (Jakopec & Susanj,2014), whereas, negative fairness perceptions are found counter-productive and leading to destructive behaviors demonstrated by the employees

(Priesemuth, Arnaud & Schminke, 2013; Kerwin, Jordan & Turner, 2015 ). The theory of justice presented by (Folger & Cronpanzano, 1998) states that those perceptions of the employees about the fairness results in certain reactions (positive or negative) which results in certain outcomes (positive or negative). Therefore, individuals will act in certain manner (show innovative work behavior or not) that ensures the equity of the outcomes they receive. Keeping the importance of the phenomena in mind, organizational justice has been under debate for its different forms in organizational research literature since long. However, mostly distributive, procedural and interactional justice, were considered the most important forms of organizational justice. Recent studies highlighted the need to focus on the multi-dimensionality of organizational justice (Colquitt, 2001; Usmani & Jamal, 2013). Therefore, this study focuses on more than three traditional dimensions of organizational justice in recent and rapid technological and innovational telecommunication industry in China. On the other hand, innovative work behavior is an important Phenomenon for organizational survival and needs high academic attention for its promotion. This is particularly true for service sector. China Outlook report (2015) stated that China telecommunication is expanding very quickly both nationally and internationally. The growth and sustainability of high-tech telecommunication sector is largely dependent on the innovative capability of its employees, which is a self-motivated process and gets affected by Nemours organizational factors. Ultimately, this study focuses on Chinese telecommunication sector for the investigation of the effect of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice on the innovative work behavior of Chinese employees. This study contributes in the body of literature by including two further dimensions of organizational distribution, namely, temporal justice and spatial justice. While analyzing the effects of organizational justice on the innovative work behavior of the individual employees from the telecommunication industry of China, five dimensional organizational justice model is employed. According to the knowledge of the researchers, this is the first attempt to investigate the relationship between the five forms of organizational justice and employee innovative work behavior.

### **Organizational justice**

Organizational justice is rendered an important matter of concern in the creation of organizational culture. In organizational literature, it has received considerable attention from the management scholars (Spell & Arnold, 2007).Therefore, in the field of organizational behavior, its importance is many time validated by researchers. Based on equity theory, Greenberg (1987) defined organizational justice as “employees’ perceptions towards organizational fairness”. According to Balwin (2006, p.1), “Organizational justice is the extent to which employee perceives workplace procedure, interactions and outcomes to be fair in nature”. Researchers have identified two, three and even four factor models of organizational justice in the literature. Typically,

organizational justice has been defined on the basis of Greenberg's (1993) three dimensional model of distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001; Kerwin, Jordan & Turner, 2015). However, in order to better understand this phenomenon, researchers emphasized on the need to identify more dimensions of organizational justice (Colquitt, 2001). Usmani and Jamal (2013), therefore, based on Goodin's (2010) study, identified two additional dimensions of organizational justice namely temporal justice and spatial justice. This study focuses on the five dimensions of organizational justice, i.e. distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, temporal justice and spatial justice. Distributive justice is defined as the "rules applied by the employees to determine the fairness in distribution of outcomes" (Cronpanzano & Folger, 1989). Procedural justice is mentioned as "the fairness of the decision processes that lead to outcomes and involves whether the decision procedures, process control and dispute settlement mechanism is fair, open, consistent, reasonable or not and whether the employees are provided any ways to participate in the decision making or not" (Yesil & Dereli, 2013). This kind of justice is founded on the equity theory of Adams (1965) which states that employees look for equality in their inputs they provide and outcomes they receive from organizational workings.

Study about organizational justice continued and interactional justice was the result of further work on organizational justice phenomena. Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the concept of interactional justice as a part of organizational justice. They defined interactional justice as "the quality of interpersonal treatment received during the enactment of organizational procedures" (p.43). In other words, it is the perceived organizational justice by the employee when he/she interacts with organization. It is particularly observed when those interactions, that are not a part of pre-established organizational policy, are undertaken. Later on, informational justice and interpersonal justice were introduced as the sub parts of interactional justice by researchers (Greenberg, 1990; Floger & Cropanzano, 1998; Colquitt, 2001). However, as mentioned earlier, due to the complex nature of the phenomena, further dimensions of organizational justice were required to study. Consequently, a study about organizational justice by Usmani and Jamal (2013) has identified two further forms of organizational justice; temporal justice and spatial justice. Temporal justice is based on the Social Justice Theory. These authors based their study on the concept of Goodin (2010) who articulated that "temporal autonomy is a matter of having discretionary control over one's time". It defines how much discretionary power one has over his/her time. In organizational settings, temporal justice is defined as "the fair distribution of the time to all its employees beside their marital or social status" (Usmani & Jamal, 2013). In other words, it is the employees' perception about the fairness of time provided to them by their organization to complete their jobs. Usmani and Jamal (2013) argued that time is a resource itself, therefore, it is not the part of distributive justice, and rather it is a separate form of organizational justice. Lastly, spatial

justice is defined as the perception about the “appropriateness of the distance” and it comprises of “resource distance” and “budget allocation discrimination” among different organizational members or branches in the allocation of organizational resources (Usmani & Jamal, 2013). How all these five forms interact with employee innovative work behavior? This question still needs a detailed exploration.

### **Employee innovative work behavior**

Innovative work behavior refers to the “intentional generation, promotion and realization of new ideas that are useful for the organizational survival” (Janssen, 2000). According to Kanter (1988) the innovative behavior “as a multiple-stage process in which an individual recognizes a problem for which she or he generates new (novel or adopted) ideas and solutions, works to promote and build support for them, and produces an applicable prototype or model for the use and benefit of the organization or parts within it”. Different scholars referred innovative work behavior differently. Mostly, idea generation (short or one dimension) has been considered an innovative work behavior with lacking empirical validity (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2008). Some others treated innovative work behavior as two stage process, comprising of idea generation and idea implementation (Spiegelaere et al., 2014). However, many recent researchers debated that innovative work behavior demands that individual goes beyond the scope of his job description and by his personal willful intentions (De Jong, 2007). Therefore, such behavior comprises not only idea generation but also all those measures that help in the promotion of those ideas and finally making them a reality. Evidently, there is reasonable amount of research work that has suggested the importance of innovative work behavior as multi-stage behavioral process (Kanter, 1988; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000). Therefore, this study also focuses on the multi-stage model of innovative work behavior.

Three stages of innovative work behavior are idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization. Idea generation refers to the generation of new and workable ideas leading to the discovery of different discrepancies and problems in the organization and available plans and solutions to solve those problems. Further, idea promotion refers to the efforts on the part of employees to promote their ideas and seek support from the fellow workers and organization. An enormous amount of positive energy is required at this stage of innovative work behavior, because getting support from the coworkers is very important for the execution of the ideas. Finally, idea realization refers to the practical implantation and simulation of once developed and promoted ideas. Employees actually utilize their provided solution to a particular problem, remove the discrepancies and spread its use across the organization. Facilitation and proper dissemination of the solution is encouraged at this particular stage of innovative work behavior. This will lead to the long term utilization of the generated, promoted and implemented ideas in the organization. Nevertheless, there are number of situational factors that might affect adversely to innovative work

behavior of the employees. One potential factor among these is organizational justice.

### **Organizational justice and employee innovative work behavior**

Organizational justice is found to be an important motivational factor for employees to show or not to show a particular behavior. If an employee feels that he/she is being treated unfairly, his/her obligation towards performing the job effectively may decrease, performance may affect and ultimately his/her contribution in work may also decrease (Momeni, Ebrahimpour & Ajirloo, 2014). Accordingly, Van de Ven (1986) articulated that EIWB is an individual driven issue and it demands a motivational drive for employees (Amabile, 1988; Pieterse et al., 2009), consequently, Organizational justice may become “a motivational process underlying EIWB at individual level” (Janssen, 2000, p.287). Moreover IWB is “an extra-role behavior” (Janssen, 2000, Smith et al., 1983), hence, organizational justice may influence that behavior positively or negatively (Moorman, 1991; Janssen, 2000). A number of studies have investigated the relationship between organizational justice and EIWB. However, according to the knowledge of researchers, no single study inspected the interaction between the five dimension model of organizational justice and EIWB in telecommunication industry in China. In their study, Ramamoorthy, Flood Slattery and Sardessai (2005) investigated the impact of psychological contract, job design and organizational justice on innovative work behavior. They found the effect of organizational justice perceptions influencing EIWB through mediating role of psychological contract. Conversely, they did not find the direct effect of organizational justice on the EIWB. In another study, Momeni et al., (2014) explored the effect of inferential organizational justice on innovative work behavior by using four factor model of organizational justice (It does not include temporal and spatial justice though). They found a strong correlation between distributive, procedural, interpersonal, informational justice and EIWB. Almansour and Minai (2012) discovered the relationship between organizational justice and innovative work behavior in Jordan’s government sector and found only interactional justice having a direct and significant relationship with employee innovative work behavior, whereas, distributive and procedural justice was found having insignificant relationship with EIWB. Kim and Lee (2013) established the effect of organizational justice (3 factor model) on the organizational commitment and innovative work behavior in virtual organizations. They found direct and significant relationship between organizational justice and innovative work behavior. Moreover, the mediating effect of organizational commitment between organizational justice and innovative work behavior was also found significant in their study. Janssen (2004) examined the moderating role of perceived distributive and procedural justice between the relationship of innovative work behavior and stress. He found that a positive relationship between innovative work behavior and stress existed when the level of perceived distributive justice and perceived procedural

justice were low. Hsu and Wang (2015) studied the effect of organizational justice on employee innovative work behavior in hospitality industry of Taiwan, however, they included the three dimension model of organizational justice (Distributive, procedural & interactional justice) in their study. They found a strong correlation between the organizational justice and employee innovative work behavior. In accordance with above literature and the research gap investigation, this study proposed to investigate the effect of five dimensions of organizational justice on the innovative work behavior of the employees in telecommunication industry of China.

### **Research design and hypotheses generation**

On the basis of above literature review, following hypotheses are generated. The hypothetical relationship between all these variables is presented in figure1.

H1: Distributive organizational justice has a positive and significant impact on EIWB.

H2: procedural organizational justice has a positive and significant impact on EIWB.

H3: Interactional organizational justice has a positive and significant impact on EIWB.

H4: Temporal organizational justice has a positive and significant impact on EIWB.

H5: Spatial organizational justice has a positive and significant impact on EIWB.

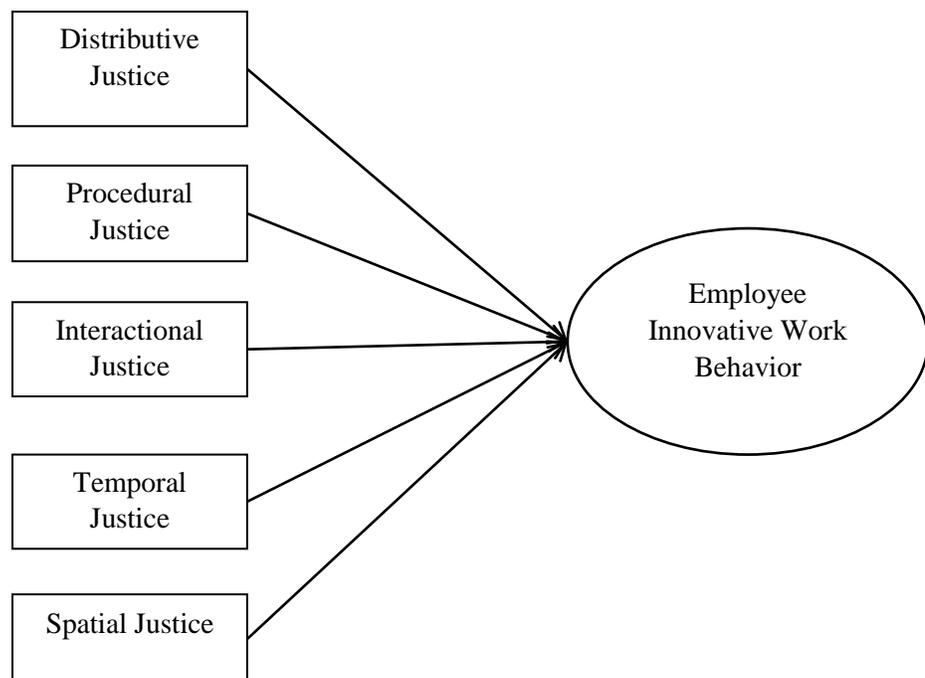


Figure 1. Hypothetical diagram of the study.

## Methodology

### *Sample Size and Sampling technique*

According to the Technavio insights (2015) report, China's telecommunication industry has increased in its market size from US \$153 billion to US\$231 billion in the years 2011-2015, representing 10.8% growth rate. It indicates the importance of telecommunication sector in China. Therefore, in order to test the proposed hypotheses of this study, data was collected from the employees of telecommunication sector in Shanghai. Using convenient sampling technique, in total 400 employees working in different departments (Finance, marketing, human resource etc.), and organizational levels, were requested to fill-up the questionnaire using a self-administered questionnaire. However, only 235 useable questionnaires were finally retrieved for final analysis. The gender composition of the sample was 45% male and 55 % female.

### *Questionnaire Design*

For validating the hypotheses of this study, 5 point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) was used. Briefly, work schedule, work load, pay level, rewards and job responsibility were the factors that considered in distributive justice 5 item scale. Biasness, information, communication, empathy, dissent and consistency were used as predictor of 5 item procedural justice scale. Further, interactional justice was measured through 9 item scale comprising on perception of respect, consideration, sensitivity, concern and ethics. These three dimensions of organizational justice were adapted from the scale of Al-Zu'bi (2010). On the other hand, temporal justice and spatial justice were measured by using the scale developed by Usmani and Jamal (2013). They developed these two scales by a careful conduction of focus group. Temporal justice covers office timings, Marital time and personal time, whereas, spatial justice covers resource distance and budget discrimination as predictor. Temporal justice comprises of 4 items and spatial justice 3 items scale. Organizational justice consisted of 26 items in total for current study. An alpha reliability of .872 was suggested by Usmani and Jamal (2013) for organizational justice scale in their study. For measuring employee innovative work behavior, a 9 item scale developed by Janssen (2000) was employed. This scale have three dimensions namely idea generation, idea promotion and idea implementation or realization. Each dimension contains 3 questions each. Janssen (2000) has reported a .94 alpha reliability in his study. All above details validates the use of these two scales in present study.

## Results and analysis

### *Descriptive statistics*

The nature of the data was analyzed by using the descriptive statistics analysis in IBM SPSS. The summary of the results from descriptive analysis is presented in table 1 as follows;

Table1. Descriptive statistics about the main variables of the study (n=235).

<b>Study Variables</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Distributive Justice	2	5	4.12	.356
Procedural Justice	1	5	4.35	.323
Interactional Justice	2	5	4.25	.287
Temporal Justice	1	5	4.25	.376
Spatial Justice	2	5	4.36	.330
EIWB	1	5	4.26	.297

*Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability analysis*

Although the scales used in this study for distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice and employee innovative work behavior all have an approved reliability and validity in previous studies, however, the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability was reassessed for current study to ensure whether or not all these scales are suitable for present study. The results of Cronbach’s Alpha reliability for present study are provided in table 3. All scales presented reasonable Alpha reliability for current study and therefore, considered as valid and reliable to be used.

Table 2: Reliability analysis of the study (n=235).

<b>Study Variables</b>	<b>Total Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability</b>
Distributive Justice	5	.631
Procedural Justice	5	.672
Interactional Justice	9	.729
Temporal Justice	5	.796
Spatial Justice	3	.578
Employee Innovative Work Behavior	9	.746

*Correlation Analysis*

The nature and strength of the relationship between distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice and employee innovative work behavior was assessed by using Pearson Product- Moment correlation technique. The results from correlation analysis are depicted in table 3. These results suggest that distributive ( $r= .528^{**}$ ,  $n= 235$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ), procedural, ( $r= .627^{**}$ ,  $n= 235$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ), interactional ( $r= .604^{**}$ ,  $n= 235$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ), temporal ( $r= .605^{**}$ ,  $n= 235$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ) and spatial justice ( $r= .606^{**}$ ,  $n= 235$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ), all are strongly and positively associated with employee innovative work behavior. It is interpreted that an increase in the level of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice is positively correlated with employee innovative work behavior.

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis for Independent and dependent variables of the study (n=235).

Study Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Distributive Justice	1	.428*	.485*	.391	.314	.528
2.Procedural Justice	-	1	.630*	.489	.407	.627
3.Interactional Justice	-	-	1	.406	.452	.604
4.Temporal Justice	-	-	-	1	.380	.605
5.Spatial Justice	-	-	-	-	1	.606
6.EIWB	-	-	-	-	-	1

\*\* P < 0.01 (2-tailed).

#### *Multiple Regression analysis*

For predicting the effect of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice on employee innovative work behavior a model was developed by multiple regression analysis. The five predictor model of organizational justice was able to account for 64.4% variance in the employee innovative work behavior ( F= 85.641, p<.000, R<sup>2</sup>= .644, 95% CI). Following multiple regression equation suggests that distributive justice explained 17% (β=.17, p< .000), procedural justice 21% (β=.211, p< .000), interactional justice 14.7% (β=.147, p< .008), temporal justice 26.1% (β=.261, p< .000) and spatial justice explained 30.2% (β=.302, p< .000) variance in employee innovative work behavior.

$$EIWB = \beta_0 + \beta_1.17 + \beta_2.211 + \beta_3.147 + \beta_4.261 + \beta_5.302\epsilon_i$$

Moreover, table 4 also provides the Tolerance and VIF values to assess the chances of multicollinearity. According to Pallant (2013), Tolerance value indicates that how much of the variability of independent variable is not explained by the other independent variables in regression model. She suggested that a very small value of Tolerance (less than .10) indicates high multiple correlation with other variables and a possible multicollinearity. Variance inflation factor (VIF), on the other hand, is the inverse of Tolerance value and VIF values above 10 might indicate potential possibility of multicollinearity. In present study, the potential chances of multicollinearity are not evident due to the appropriate values of Tolerance and VIF as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Multiple Regression analyses of Distributive, Procedural, Interactional, Temporal and Spatial Justice predicting Employee Innovative Work Behavior (n=235).

Model	$\beta$	b	t	p	S.E	Collir Toler
Constant		.133	.653	.514	.203	
Distributive Justice	.170	.141	3.66 3	.000	.039	.709
Procedural Justice	.211	.194	3.93 2	.000	.049	.526
Interactional Justice	.147	.151	2.69 5	.008	.056	.515
Temporal Justice	.261	.206	5.57 2	.000	.037	.692
Spatial Justice	.302	.271	6.64 4	.000	.041	.739
$R^2 = .652$ $\Delta R^2 = .644$ $F = 85.641$						

Note: b= Un-standardized Coefficients, S.E= standard error of variables,  $\beta$ = standardized coefficients, t= t-statistic, p= significance level.  $R^2$ = R square,  $\Delta R^2$  = adjusted R square.

### Discussions

This study intended to find out the effect of five forms of organizational justice on the innovative work behavior of the employees working in telecommunication sector in China. Results have suggested a positive and significant effect of all forms of organizational justice on the employee innovative work behavior. Distributive, procedural and interactional justice are predicted to show 17%, 21.1% and 14.7% variance in the innovative work behavior of the employees working in telecommunication sector. These results are consistent with previous researchers' findings (Momeni et al., 2014; Kim and Lee, 2013; HSU & Wang, 2015). According to Fu and Lihua (2012), organizational justice in the form of fair rules and regulations for employees, fairness of input towards organization and output that they receive, fairness in interpersonal matters is an important factor in Chinese service providing firms. This indicates that when the employees perceive their organization is conscious enough to provide fair treatment in terms of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial justice, they strongly realize that their contribution towards their organization is fairly acknowledged and therefore, they are more willing and motivated to share their ideas with organization, ask for reasonable support from organization and then successfully get helped to implement those ideas. In the light of these findings, H1, H2 and H3 are supported and therefore, not rejected.

Interestingly, both temporal and spatial justice has indicated highest level of variation (26.1% and 30.2% respectively) in employee innovative work behavior.

This indicates that both temporal and spatial fairness are quite important factor for Chinese employees. These results are in accordance with previous researches (Usmani & Jamal, 2013; Goodin, 2010). Consequently, H4 and H5 are also supported. These results are not astonishing because according to Hofstede (2016) report, China is very low at individualism dimension. With a score of 20, on individualism dimension it is evident that Chinese society is highly collectivist society. As compare to Western countries, preference for family and friends is an important element of collectivist societies in East; therefore, personal relationships are at the top priority for Chinese people. Chinese people want to spend fair amount of their time with their family members and friends. They probably will be less committed towards the organization, if the perceived temporal justice level is low and therefore, less motivated to generate and share their innovative ideas and ask for support in implementing them. This study indicated the highest level of variance in employee innovative work behavior through spatial justice. Perception of fairness in the allocation of organizational resources and budget according to the need throughout the organization or among different branches is suggested to provide a sense of confidence in organizational polices regarding biasness and discrimination and therefore, encourages employees to generate better ideas, share their ideas with others in organization and get their support for implanting those ideas successfully.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that when the employees perceive fairness in their organizations in the shape of distributive, procedural, interactional, temporal and spatial, they are more willing to be innovative, share more novel ideas, discuss those ideas thoroughly with co-workers and superiors in their organization and work in the direction of implementing those ideas. Fairness in all forms is important for the organizational sustainability and competitiveness; however, this study suggested that for Chinese employees, temporal and spatial justice are more important than other forms of justice. Therefore, those organizations who want to improve their innovative capability in eastern countries are suggested to treat their employees with reasonable fairness, particularly temporal and spatial justice. Thus it is worthwhile for present organizations to promote employees' perception of fairness and make ensure that they are treated fairly. Alternatively this will ensure fair and motivated participation in generating, promoting and implementing novel ideas.

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