POOR ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE

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WHAT IS POOR ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE?

Poor organisational justice occurs when the principles of fairness, equity, and justice are not upheld within the organisation. It occurs when there are systematic failures or deficiencies in the way decisions are made, employees are treated, and resources are allocated. It refers to fairness at work, including procedural, informational, interpersonal and relational fairness, as well as distributive justice.

Procedural fairness, also known as procedural justice, refers to the perceived fairness of the procedures, processes, and methods used in decision-making within an organisation. It focuses on the fairness of the procedures themselves, rather than the outcome of those procedures. Procedural fairness is an important aspect of organisational justice and contributes to employees' perceptions of fairness and trust in the workplace.

Informational fairness refers to the perception that the distribution of information, communication, and decision-making processes within an organization are fair and transparent. It involves providing employees with accurate and relevant information that is necessary for their work and decision-making. Examples of informational fairness include:

Relational fairness, also known as relational justice or interactional justice, refers to the overall quality of relationships and interactions within the organisation. It encompasses the broader context of how individuals are treated, the quality of communication, and the overall fairness of interpersonal dynamics. Relational fairness looks at the organisational climate and the extent to which individuals perceive respectful and just treatment in their interactions with others.

Interpersonal fairness relates to how individuals are treated by others within the organisation. It involves perceptions of respectful and just treatment, dignity, and consideration of individuals' rights and needs. In contrast to relational fairness, interpersonal fairness specifically focuses on the fairness of individual interpersonal interactions. It zooms in on the fairness of specific interactions, such as how individuals are treated in one-on-one encounters or small group settings. Interpersonal fairness examines whether individuals perceive respectful and just treatment in their direct interactions with supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates.

Distributive justice: Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes or resource allocation. It focuses on whether employees perceive that rewards, benefits, promotions, and other resources are distributed fairly. Poor distributive justice occurs when employees feel that rewards and outcomes are inequitable, arbitrary, or based on factors unrelated to performance or merit.

Poor organisational justice can have detrimental effects on employee morale, engagement, and overall organisational performance.

EXAMPLES OF POOR ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE

Some of examples of what poor organisational justice can look like in the workplace include:

- excluding people who will be affected by decisions from consultation and decision-making processes, including health and safety and union representatives
- failing to take appropriate action to address inappropriate behaviour, poor performance or misconduct
- lack of communication and transparency regarding organisational direction, strategy, objectives and decisions
- bias, impartiality, favouritism and nepotism
- discrimination, harassment and inequitable treatment of workers.
- neglecting the sensitive treatment and privacy of workers' information.
- implementing unfair, biased, or inconsistently applied policies or procedures.
- punishing workers for factors beyond their control.
- neglecting to acknowledge or accommodate reasonable needs of workers.
- engaging in discrimination against specific groups or applying policies unfairly.
- insufficiently addressing underperformance, inappropriate behaviour, or misconduct.
- allocating work, shifts, and opportunities in a discriminatory or unfair manner.
- lacking or having inadequate processes for making decisions that affect workers.
- unfair resource allocation, such as unequal distribution of rewards, promotions, salary increases
- Inconsistent application of organisational policies, rules, or procedures across individuals or departments
- retaliation for speaking up. If employees raise concerns or voice grievances regarding unfair treatment or organizational injustices, they may face retaliation or backlash. This can create a culture of fear where employees are discouraged from speaking out, further perpetuating victimisation.
- targeting of whistle-blowers. Employees who expose wrongdoing, unethical behaviour, or organisational injustices may become targets of victimisation.
- toxic work environment where bullying and harassment thrive.
- exclusion and isolation. Individuals who are treated unfairly or perceive injustices may be excluded or marginalised within the organisation. They may be denied opportunities, excluded from decision-making processes, or isolated from important networks and resources. This exclusion can contribute to feelings of victimisation and undermine their sense of belonging.
- performance evaluations and feedback that is skewed or biased.

- unequal opportunities and rewards.

PRODECURAL FAIRNESS / PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Procedural fairness, also known as procedural justice, includes

1. **Consistency:** Consistency refers to the application of procedures and rules in a consistent and standardized manner across all individuals and situations. Treating similar cases or individuals similarly helps establish a perception of fairness.
2. **Impartiality:** Impartiality means making decisions based on objective and unbiased criteria, without favouritism or personal biases. Decisions should be free from discrimination or any unfair considerations.
3. **Accuracy and correctness:** Accuracy refers to ensuring that decisions are based on accurate and reliable information. The procedures should be designed to collect relevant data and assess information accurately. Correctness involves making decisions that are accurate, logical, and aligned with relevant policies and guidelines.
4. **Participation and voice:** Providing opportunities for employee participation and giving them a voice in decision-making processes contributes to procedural fairness. Allowing employees to express their views, concerns, and perspectives helps them feel included and respected in the decision-making process.
5. **Transparency:** Transparency involves openness and clear communication about the decision-making process. Employees should be informed about the procedures, criteria, and timelines involved. Transparent processes help build trust and understanding among employees.
6. **Appeals and grievance mechanisms:** Providing avenues for employees to appeal decisions or lodge grievances when they perceive unfair treatment is an important aspect of procedural fairness. It allows employees to seek review or redress if they believe that a decision was unjust or violated the established procedures.

INFORMATIONAL FAIRNESS

Examples of informational fairness include:

1. **Open and transparent communication:** Ensuring that information is shared openly and transparently across the organisation, including updates on organisational changes, performance expectations, and important decisions.
2. **Timely and clear communication:** Providing information to employees in a timely manner and ensuring that it is clear and understandable, avoiding ambiguity or withholding crucial information.
3. **Justification for decisions:** When decisions are made, providing clear explanations or justifications for those decisions, helping employees understand the reasoning and underlying factors involved.

4. **Access to information:** Ensuring that employees have access to the necessary information and resources required to perform their job effectively. This can involve providing training, tools, and access to relevant data and reports.

RELATIONAL FAIRNESS / INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE

Poor interactional justice occurs when employees experience disrespectful treatment, lack of transparency, or exclusion from important communication channels.

Also known as Relational fairness or relational justice, it includes:

1. **Respectful treatment:** Relational fairness emphasizes treating individuals with respect, dignity, and politeness. It involves valuing employees' perspectives, listening to their ideas, and showing consideration for their feelings and opinions.
2. **Trust and openness:** Building trust and fostering open communication are essential components of relational fairness. Employees should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, concerns, and feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment.
3. **Consistency and transparency:** Consistency and transparency in decision-making and actions are important for relational fairness. Employees should understand the rationale behind decisions and perceive them as fair and just. Transparent processes and clear communication help establish trust and confidence in the organization.
4. **Empathy and empathy:** Relational fairness involves demonstrating empathy and understanding towards employees. It means recognizing and considering their needs, concerns, and work-life balance. Empathetic leaders and colleagues show care and support, creating a positive and supportive work environment.
5. **Conflict resolution:** Resolving conflicts in a fair and constructive manner is crucial for relational fairness. Providing opportunities for open dialogue, mediating conflicts, and finding mutually beneficial resolutions contribute to a fair and respectful workplace.
6. **Fairness in performance evaluations:** Relational fairness also extends to performance evaluations and feedback. Providing constructive feedback, setting clear expectations, and assessing performance fairly help employees perceive the process as just and unbiased.

INTERPERSONAL FAIRNESS

Examples of informational fairness include:

1. **Respectful treatment:** Treating all employees with respect, dignity, and courtesy, irrespective of their position or background. This includes being polite, listening to others' opinions, and valuing their input.
2. **Consistency and impartiality:** Applying rules, policies, and procedures consistently and fairly across all individuals, without favouritism or bias.

3. **Ethical behaviour:** Demonstrating ethical conduct and integrity in interactions with employees, colleagues, and stakeholders. This includes being honest, maintaining confidentiality when necessary, and adhering to ethical standards.
4. **Empathy and empathy:** Showing empathy and understanding towards employees' concerns, needs, and work-life balance. Being responsive to their feedback, providing support, and addressing their issues or grievances.

IMPACTS OF POOR ORGANISATIONAL JUSTICE

The impacts of poor organisation justice on both workers and organisations is numerous. Some impacts to consider include:

ON WORKERS

Decreased job satisfaction: When employees perceive unfairness in the distribution of rewards, decision-making processes, or interpersonal treatment, their job satisfaction tends to decrease. They may feel demotivated, undervalued, and unappreciated, leading to reduced overall satisfaction with their work.

Increased and chronic stress: feelings of fair treatment and perceived injustice can contribute to increased stress levels among employees. Constant exposure to unfairness, bias, or mistreatment can lead to chronic stress, which can have detrimental effects on mental health, including an increased risk of depression.

Depression and negative cognitive patterns: When employees perceive unfair treatment it can create a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. They may feel that their situation is unlikely to improve, leading to feelings of despair and contributing to depressive symptoms. Individuals can also ruminate on negative experiences, focusing on perceived injustices or unfair treatment, contribute to the development or persistence of depressive symptoms and negative cognitive patterns.

ON ORGANISATIONS

Lower organisational commitment: Poor organisational justice can erode employees' commitment to the organisation. When they perceive unfairness, they may feel less loyal and dedicated to the organisation's goals and values. This can result in reduced engagement, increased turnover intention, and a decline in organisational citizenship behaviours.

Reduced trust in leadership: Poor organisational justice can erode trust in leaders and managers. Employees may perceive leaders as untrustworthy or biased, leading to strained relationships and a lack of confidence in their decision-making abilities. This can hinder effective communication, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of leadership.

Negative workplace relationships: Poor organizational justice can strain relationships among employees, supervisors, and teams. Unfair treatment or biased decisions can create conflicts, foster a negative work environment, and damage teamwork and collaboration. This can hinder effective communication, cooperation, and the overall morale of the workforce.

Higher turnover and talent loss: Employees who perceive poor organisational justice are more likely

Anxiety and Distrust: When employees perceive unfairness in decision-making processes or inconsistent application of policies, it creates a sense of uncertainty, unpredictability, and heightened anxiety and distrust.

Impacts on self-esteem and worth: When individuals perceive unfair treatment or a lack of recognition, it can negatively impact their self-esteem and sense of worth. Feeling undervalued, unappreciated, or disrespected can erode self-confidence and contribute to feelings of anxiety and self-doubt.

to seek alternative employment opportunities. High turnover can result in the loss of valuable talent, increased recruitment and training costs, and disruptions to team dynamics and productivity.

Increased workers compensation claims: due to depression, stress and anxiety.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Management involves identifying potential risks, assessing their likelihood and impact, and developing strategies to mitigate or control them. It is a proactive process that seeks to prevent risks from occurring or minimise their impact if they do occur.

No person should be injured in their workplace, including psychological injury. To meet their duties to ensure health and safety, employers must identify and eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks so far as is reasonably practicable. How long (duration), how often (frequency) and how significantly (severity) workers are exposed to psychosocial hazards impacts the level of risks. Hazards interacting or combining with each other may also impact this. Further guidance on the risk management process is available in the Code of Practice: *How to manage work health and safety risks.* For more information on the risk management process for psychosocial hazards, please view *Section 2 of the Model Code of Practice.*

Mind Your Head advocates for *prevention* – that is, identifying risk, implementing or changing systems to prevent worker harm or injury *before it occurs.*

Examples of Risk Management Strategies for Poor Organisational Justice include:

- **Develop and Implement Clear Policies and Procedures:** Establish comprehensive policies and procedures that promote fairness, transparency, and accountability in all aspects of the organisation, including decision-making, resource allocation, performance evaluations, and conflict resolution.

- **Train and Educate Employees and Managers:** Provide training programs and workshops to educate employees and managers on the principles of organisational justice, including the importance of fairness, unbiased decision-making, and respectful interpersonal interactions.

- **Encourage Open Communication Channels:** Foster a culture of open communication where employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns, grievances, and suggestions regarding organisational justice. Provide multiple channels for reporting and addressing issues, such as anonymous suggestion boxes, regular feedback sessions, or dedicated ethics hotlines.

- **Establish Fair Performance Evaluation Systems**: Develop performance evaluation systems that are based on clear and objective criteria, communicated in advance, and consistently applied across the organisation. Provide ongoing feedback and coaching to employees to ensure transparency and fairness in the evaluation process.

- **Implement a Whistle-blower Protection Program:** Establish a mechanism to protect employees who report organizational injustices, unethical practices, or wrongdoing. Ensure that whistle-blowers are shielded from retaliation and have a safe and confidential platform to voice their concerns.

WAYS TO MANAGE RISKS

Consult workers and HSRs. Establish Health and Safety Committees with at least 50% representation from workers. Encourage feedback, especially on any changes.

Consider how long, how often and how severely workers are exposed to hazards. The longer, more often and worse the low job control, the higher the risk that workers may be harmed.

Utilise surveys and tools to assess psychosocial risks in the workplace, particularly for businesses with over 20 employees.

Establish a system for workers to report their concerns, while ensuring anonymity and treating their concerns with respect and seriousness to encourage reporting.

Observe work and behaviours, such as prolonged work duration, excessive paperwork, or customer frustration, which may indicate low job control.

Review available information, including employee retention, incident reports, complaints, time-off records, injuries, incidents, and workers' compensation to identify potential hazards.

Identify other hazards present and evaluate how they may interact or combine to create new, heightened risks. For instance, low job control could pose a greater risk in workplaces with high job demands if workers are unable to take breaks or switch tasks to manage fatigue. Finally, consider the

duration, frequency, and severity of workers' exposure to hazards, as prolonged and severe exposure to low job control could increase the risk of harm.

CONTROL MEASURES

Control measures are specific actions or procedures that are put in place to manage or mitigate identified risks. They are reactive measures that are implemented after risks have been identified and assessed as part of the risk management process. Control measures are designed to reduce the likelihood or impact of risks, and they can take many forms, including administrative controls, engineering controls, and personal protective equipment.

Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuously monitor and assess the organizational justice climate through employee surveys, focus groups, or feedback mechanisms. Regularly review and evaluate policies, procedures, and decision-making processes to identify and address any instances of poor organizational justice.

Encourage Diversity and Inclusion: Promote diversity and inclusion within the organization to prevent discrimination or biased practices. Ensure that policies, procedures, and decision-making processes consider and respect the diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and needs of all employees.

Encourage Fairness in Resource Allocation: Develop mechanisms to ensure fairness in the allocation of resources, including work assignments, promotions, training opportunities, and rewards. Consider objective criteria, such as skills, qualifications, and performance, to guide resource allocation decisions.

Provide Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Establish effective conflict resolution procedures, such as mediation or arbitration, to address disputes or grievances related to organizational justice. Ensure that these mechanisms are accessible, impartial, and provide a fair and efficient resolution process.

Promote Ethical Leadership: Encourage ethical behaviour and lead by example at all levels of the organisation. Foster a culture of integrity, fairness, and respect, where leaders actively promote and uphold organizational justice principles.

Conduct Regular Audits and Reviews: Conduct periodic audits and reviews of organizational justice practices to identify potential areas of improvement and ensure compliance with established policies and procedures.

Encourage Employee Feedback and Participation: Encourage employees to provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes that affect their work environment. Involve employees in shaping organizational policies, procedures, and practices to enhance their sense of ownership and fairness.

DO

Ensure equitable, consistent, and unbiased application of workplace policies and regulations.

Establish a clear and transparent procedure for addressing complaints and appeals.

Foster and promote a work environment that is positive and characterised by fairness.

Act swiftly an appropriately when concerns are raised.

Ensure that all policies are available are easily accessible to all staff.

DO NOT

Overlook unfair work practices. The perception of injustice in the workplace can have detrimental effects on both individuals and the overall work environment.

Retaliate negatively against whistle-blowers or those who speak up