IMPACT OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE ON THE TRUST CLIMATE AMONG MIDDLE EASTERN EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: Having a positive trust climate and organizational distributive justice is essential for any organization. Many studies have found that both trust and organizational justice have a direct positive impact on organizational performance. However, the relationship between them has not been considered widely, especially in the Middle East. Therefore, the study aims to examine the relationship between organizational distributive justice and the trust climate among the employees in three Middle Eastern countries and to find out what demographic variables affect this relationship. The sample of the study consisted of 190 employees who came from three countries, namely, Syria, Egypt, and Turkey. To achieve the purpose of the study, a questionnaire of 20 items was sent online to employees. Later descriptive analysis methods and Pearson correlation were used to achieve the purposes of this study. The study found that there was a strong positive relationship between organizational distributive justice and the trust climate. Besides, there was a significant difference in organizational distributive justice when it was related to work experience. There were also statistically significant differences in trust in the supervisor, related to age; moreover, there were significant differences in trust in the organization and co-workers depending on work experience level, however, gender did not show any significant differences.

Keywords: organizational distributive justice, trust climate, human resources, management organization behavior, Syria, Egypt, Turkey

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Introduction

Many scholars have been interested in the relationships between trust and organizational justice because they have found that they have a direct impact on organizational effectiveness and its effects on employees’ willingness to be more
productive and give better performance (Aryee et al., 2002; Wong, 2012; Ključnikov et al., 2019).

Organizations proceed to look for approaches to enhance participation and coordination efforts among their employees; mistrust in the administration has been observed to be the essential deterrent in employees’ relationships (McCune, 1998). Trust is an important element of any positive exchange relationship (Gould et al., 2005). It has been defined as ‘the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party’ (Mayer et al., 1995). Another definition of trust was made by Rousseau et al. (1998), who described it as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.” Davis et al. (2000) have mentioned that the management of the organization has an impact on trust in a direct way. Moreover, the study indicated that some organizational outcomes such as profitability, and employee turnover are linked directly to trust in the organization’s management (Oláh et al., 2019a).

Trust can exist between the employee and his/her peers and supervisor, or between the employee and the organization (Oláh et al., 2019b), as well as between organizations (Sroka, 2011). One should add that a low level of trust becomes an opportunity to treat the relationship between two parties in terms of temporality (Cygler and Sroka, 2017). The literature on trust divides trust into three categories: trust as a personality trait, trust as behavioral intention and trust based on characteristics (Chhetri, 2014; Žuľová et al., 2018).

Organizational justice is the research area that concerns fairness at the workplace and includes fairness in resource allocation, equity in decision-making procedures, and treatment characterized by interpersonal fairness (Greenberg, 1987; Lapidot et al., 2007). One of the essential effects of organizational justice, which has recently become an area of interest is the trust climate that is being investigated in this study and is divided into three levels (trust in the supervisor, trust in co-workers, and trust in the organization). Organizational justice can be grouped into three categories: distributive, procedural and interactional justice. Equity theory explained distributive justice as follows: “Distributive Justice evaluates the fairness of outcome distribution” (Deutsch, 1985). Procedural justice refers to fairness in the decisions made and fairness in the outcome distribution, including the inclusion of a system for dealing with employee complaints (Simpson and Kaminski, 2007). Finally, some scholars have mentioned the importance of the human side or social aspects in organizational practices, such as the quality of the treatment of, and behaviors toward, the recipient of justice and the fairness of the reward system and the allocation of resources; this is referred to as interpersonal justice (Chou, 2009; Bies and Moag, 1986; Ashraf, 2018).

In this study, the focus will only be on distributive justice, which is related to the employees’ perception of whether or not benefits are distributed in a fair way (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998).
Most studies have tried to understand the impact on organizational trust of organizational justice in its three categories. However, this research study will undertake to study one aspect of organizational justice and its impact on the three groups of the trust climate in order to understand which level of trust is affected more when there is a lack of distributive justice at the workplace. Consequently, it will help to give a more precise view of the effects of distributive justice on the trust climate in order to provide managers with a wider vision. This is particularly true in the operation of banking organizations and corporate relationships (Lehtner et al., 2019). Moreover, the current study will be conducted in three Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Syria, and Turkey), so the study will try to understand whether there is any difference between employees in Western and in Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, the main research questions of the study are:

- What are the levels of distributive justice and the trust climate as perceived by employees in the Middle East?
- Is there any significant difference in the means of distributive justice or the trust climate in terms of the demographic factors of age, work experience, religion, and gender?
- Is there any relationship between distributive justice and the trust climate (trust in the organization, supervisor and co-workers)?

Organizational distributive justice and the trust climate

Trust scholars have claimed that human resource practices play an important role in trust improvement. Whitener (1997) argued that the activities of human resources practice can create a situation, in which employees feel obliged to behave in a positive way, and this includes trust; these are precisely those activities that seek to improve communication and to empower employees to develop their skills and build supportive relationships. In the same way, human resources practices have a positive impact on organizational distributive justice (Singh and Kassa, 2016).

Organizational distributive justice requires that benefits, rights, and duties are distributed with consideration given to abilities and commitments. The main issue in distributive justice is to make sure that what employees gain from the rewards are distributed in a correct, appropriate, and moral way (Erdem and Ozen, 2003). Konovsky and Pugh’s study (1994) found that distributive justice is not related to trust in the supervisor. While et al. (2002) found that distributive justice and procedural and interpersonal justice had a positive relationship with trust in organizations, while only interpersonal justice has a positive relationship with trust in the supervisor. Chen et al. (2015) studied the relationship between organizational justice and organizational trust. They found that the organizational justice perceived by nurses significantly and positively affects their organizational trust; they also found that
distributive justice had the most significant influence among the three variables within organizational justice. Moorman et al. (1993) found that procedural justice has a more significant influence than distributive justice in predicting organizational trust. Pillai et al. (2001) argued that if the organizational outcomes are distributed relatively fairly, trust is more likely to be higher; in the same context, Herriot et al. (1998) argued that the first demonstration of trust depends on achieving the perceived obligations. Moreover, the positive experiences of the employee at the workplace are directly related to positive work environments of trust for him or her. Thornhill and Saunders (2003) found that if the organizational outcomes are distributed fairly among the employees and the organization trust will be higher.

Mansour (2104) tried to investigate the result of the three variables of organizational justice based on supervisor support, organizational support, and supervisor trust and organizational trust. The study found that trust in the supervisor had a substantial role in creating the employees’ fairness perceptions within the organization.

Tlaiss and Elamin (2015) conducted a study that tried to find the relationship between organizational trust and trust in non-western contexts; they conducted the study in Saudi Arabia and attempted to study the correlation between trust in the supervisor and trust in the organization. Besides, they tried to find out whether organizational justice (with its three variables) has any relationship with these two variables of trust. Finally, they attempted to examine the mediating role of trust in the direct supervisor in the relationship between organizational justice and trust in an organization, their results indicated a direct positive correlation between trust in the supervisor and trust in an organization, which is consistent with results from previous studies (Agarwal, 2014; Liu and Ding, 2012). Interpersonal justice was the only predictor for trust in the direct supervisor. The study also found that procedural justice and interpersonal justice were predictors of trust in an organization. Finally, it found that trust in a direct supervisor mediated the relationship between organizational justice and trust in the organization. According to Darawsheh (2017), who conducted her research in Jordanian universities, organizational justice correlates positively with organizational trust; moreover, the study found that there are no statistically significant differences in organizational trust in terms of the type of university, rank or gender. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational trust.

The general characteristics of the sample
The surveyed sample consisted of 190 employees. The questionnaire was sent online to 250 employees; however, only 190 employees had delivered completed and valid answers, so only a sample of 190 employees was used in the analysis, therefore, the percentage of respondents is 76%, which is an acceptable percentage. The percentages of the demographics of the study were as follows: 63.7% of
employees were male and 36.3% female; 76.3% of the surveyed employees were Muslim, 12.5% Christian, and 11.1% had no religion; the nationalities involved were Syrian, Egyptian, Turkish, with percentages of 66.6%, 13.7%, and 19.5%, respectively.
The employees were grouped into four age categories: 67.4% were between 20 and 29, 29.5% between 30 and 39, 1.6% between 40 and 49, and 1.6% were older than 50. The employees were grouped into five categories on the basis of their work experience, with all groups having a similar percentage.

Research method
To achieve the study goals, the researchers used one questionnaire with two parts. The first part dealt with organizational distributed justice (ODJ): after reviewing the literature, it was found that the questionnaire best fitting our study goals was the questionnaire used by Al-zu’bi (2010) that consisted of 5 items to which the respondent could answer on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Sample items include “My work schedule is fair”, “Overall, the rewards I receive are quite fair” and “I feel my job responsibilities are quite fair.” The reliability test was carried out to ensure the measures were precise. The reliability and the internal consistency in the case of the ODJ were 0.823 on the Cronbach’s Alpha test, which indicates a very high internal consistency.
The second part dealt with the trust climate: after reviewing the literature, it was found that the questionnaire best fitting our study goals was the one developed by Donovan et al. (1998) and Downey et al. (2015), which consists of 10 items measuring the three variables of the trust climate. The respondent could choose from a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Sample items include “I trust the organization”, “Employees’ questions and problems are responded to quickly”, “Co-workers trust each other”, “Employees are trusted” and “I trust my supervisor.” A reliability test was carried out to ensure the measures were precise. The reliability and the internal consistency in the case of the trust climate were 0.846 on the Cronbach’s Alpha test, which indicates a very high internal consistency.

Results
To answer the first question, which was “What are the levels of distributive justice and the trust climate as perceived by employees in the Middle East?”, in terms of how it is related to distributive justice, the mean and standard deviation were calculated at Σ3.12 points, with the standard deviation at 1.166. This is considered the middle level for the mean as it relates to a Likert scale. The reason for this may be that employees do not perceive that the pay they receive is fair enough and also that the company does not give enough rewards to its employees. The third reason for the middle level reported for distributive justice was that employees did not perceive the workload to be fair enough, which means that management should
care more about the workload while dividing it between employees (Table 1). The current results agree with the study of Darwsheh (2017); Suad and Sultan (2009), whose results also featured a mean at the middle level, but they disagree with those of Yilmaz and Altinjurt (2012) where it was at a high level.

Table 1: Means of the answers related to organizational distributive justice

| Item                  | My work schedule is fair | I think my pay is fair | Overall, the rewards I receive are quite fair | I consider my work load is quite fair | I feel my job responsibilities are quite fair | Average of total Answers |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mean                  | 3.28                     | 9.92                   | 9.93                                         | 3.16                                  | 3.31                                          | 3.12                     |
| Std. Deviation        | 1.155                    | 1.205                  | 1.157                                        | 1.162                                 | 1.155                                         | 1.166                    |
| Level                 | Middle                   | Middle                 | Middle                                       | Middle                                | Middle                                        | Middle                   |

Source: Authors’ design; standard questionnaire (2018), N=190

On the other hand, for the trust climate, the mean and standard deviation were calculated at Σ3.31 points, with the standard deviation at 1.074, which is considered a middle level for the mean related to the Likert scale. The results ranged from the high level to the middle one. The highest mean was in item 10, with a mean of Σ 3.59 points; this was for the statement “My supervisors trust me” (at the high level), while item 4 with a mean of Σ 3.06 points was the lowest mean; this was for the statement “Employees’ questions and problems are responded to quickly” (at the middle level). From Table 2, it is clear that items related to trust in a supervisor (items 2 and 10) are high. The items related to trust in the organization (3, 4, 1, 8) are all ranked in the middle, while the items related to trust in co-workers (5, 6, 7, 9) ranged between high and middle.

The reason may be that the direct supervisor builds strong trust with his/her employees, which makes them also trust him/her. In addition, it could be noticed that employees respect and help each other, but there are some reasons why trust between them can decrease, such as arguments and lack of a trusting attitude. This result agrees with Jowdat (2014) and disagrees with those of Yilmaz and Altinjurt (2012); Darwsheh (2017) whose results showed a high level of trust.

Table 2: Means of the answers related to trust climate

| No. | Item                                      | Mean | Std.  | Rank | Level |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1   | Employees are trusted in the organization | 3.20 | 1.050 | 6    | Middle|
| 2   | I trust my supervisor                      | 3.43 | 1.080 | 3    | High  |
| 3   | Employees are treated with respect         | 3.34 | 1.129 | 4    | Middle|
For the second question which was “Is there any significant difference in the means of distributive justice or the trust climate related to the demographic factors of age, work experience, religion, and gender?”, the researchers applied a non-parametric test – K independent samples (Kruskal Wallis) – and it was found that there was a significant difference (p=0.015) in employees’ mean answers related to justice and work experience. The highest mean was for employees who had less than 1-year’s experience (Σ3.39 points); second came employees who had 3 to 5 years’ experience (Σ3.32 points), and third were employees with more than ten years’ experience (Σ3.31 points).

In the same way, it was also noticed that there was a significant difference (p=0.020) in the employees’ mean answers related to trust in co-workers and work experience. The highest mean was for employees who had 3-5 years’ experience (Σ3.52 points), the second-highest for employees with less than 1-year (Σ3.43 points), and third was for employees with 1 to 3 years (Σ3.22 points). Furthermore, again the researchers applied the same methods to study the mean differences and found that there is a significant difference (p=0.001) in the employees’ mean answers related to trust in supervisors and work experience. The highest mean was for employees who had 3-5 years’ experience (Σ3.57 points), the second-highest for those with less than 1-year (Σ3.44 points), and the third for those with 1 to 3 years (Σ3.07 points). However, there was no significant difference in the employees’ mean answers related to trust in supervisors and work experience.

On the other hand, it was found there was a significant difference in the employees’ mean answers for trust in supervisor and age (p=0.046). The highest mean was the mean of trust in the supervisor for employees who were aged older than 50 years (Σ4.50 points), the second-highest was the mean of employees who were between 20 and 29 years old (Σ3.54 points), and the third for those between 40 and 49, with (Σ3.33 points); those between 30 and 39 had a mean of Σ3.02.

Despite the fact that gender and religion were not found to have any effects related to the means of the study variables, regression analysis was used to check whether
any of these variables play a predicting role in the relationship between distributive justice and trust; it was found that only religion could play a predicting role in the relationship between distributive justice and trust in a supervisor.

Finally, to answer the last question, “Is there any relationship between distributive justice and the trust climate (trust in the organization, supervisor, and co-workers)?” a Pearson rank correlation was applied, which showed a middle-level positive correlation between distributive justice and trust in a supervisor (rho=0.465, p=0.0001) and distributive justice and trust in the organization (rho=0.465, p=0.0001) and between distributive justice and trust in co-workers (rho=0.413, p=0.0001). This result agrees with those empirical research results that have drawn attention to the correlation between distributive justice and the trust climate.

Discussion
The results showed that distributive justice has a positive effect on the trust climate, and thus these results agree with many previous studies, such as those by Aryee et al. (2002), Pillai et al. (2001), Chen et al. (2015). In the Middle Eastern context, the results obtained agree with Darawsheh (2017), who conducted her study in Jordanian universities and found that organizational justice has a positive relationship with organizational trust; they also agree partially with Tlaiss and Elamin (2015) and Mansour (2014), who found that distributive justice has a positive correlation with trust in a supervisor, and no relationship with trust in the organization.

On the other hand, while trying to answer the question -- “At what levels do employees in the Middle East perceive distributive justice and the trust climate to be?”, the results indicated that the mean of the answers related to distributive justice was in the middle level on the Likert scale, which may be a result of an unfair distribution of pay at work that makes the employee feel that distributive justice is not very strong; another reason related to these results may be the feelings of employees regarding the distribution of rewards at work. This study agrees with those by Darwsheh (2017), Saud and Sultan (2009), in which the means were at the middle level. Conversely, the present study disagrees with that of Yilmaz and Altinjurt (2012), in which it was at the high level. On the other hand, for the trust climate, the results indicated that the mean of the trust climate was at the middle level on the Likert scale. Furthermore, it was also noticed that trust in a supervisor was high, while trust in the organization was at the middle level. Finally, trust in co-workers ranged between middle and high; therefore, the researchers supposed that the reason for these means may be that the direct supervisor builds a strong trust with his employees, which makes them also trust him. Hence, the trust here is at the interpersonal level. Besides, it could be noticed that employees respect and help each other, but there are some reasons why the trust between them may decrease, such as arguments and lack of a trusting attitude. This result agrees with Jowdat (2014) and disagrees with Yilmaz and Altinjurt (2012) and Darwsheh...
(2017), whose results showed a high level of trust. Finally, for the question “Is there any significant difference in the means of distributive justice or the trust climate related to the demographic factors of age, work experience, religion, and gender?” the results indicated that there was no significant difference in the means related to gender, which agrees with Darwsheh (2017). Although it was found that religion could predict trust and played a decisive role in the relationship between distributive justice and trust in the supervisor, there was no significant difference in the means related to it.

The study found that there was a significant difference in the means when it is related to work experience, except for trust in a supervisor, where there was no significant difference in the means of trust in a supervisor related to work experience. On the other hand, the results showed that there was a significant difference in the means of trust in a supervisor related to age; employees who were older than 50 were more likely to have a higher level of trust in a supervisor. Therefore, and based on what was mentioned above, it could be noticed that having positive distributive justice is essential for promoting the trust climate at a workplace, and previous researchers have shown that it can lead to better organizational effectiveness at work (Aryee et al., 2002; Wong, 2012).

In terms of implementations, the findings mentioned above show different aspects of implementations. In organizations, there is a need for achieving a fair reward distribution between employees when it would be used as a way for improving trust climate, especially increasing trust toward the organization. Interpersonal trust is being affected by the religion of the supervisor; therefore, when creating teams, it is more effective to take the religion of the supervisor into consideration since trust with positive outcomes of reward distribution on trust on the supervisor can be predicted through the religion.

Finally, organizations need to understand the employees’ age and level of experience in the organization when trying to achieve or maintain a positive trust climate through distribution justice.

**Conclusion**

The study has attempted to understand the relationship between distributional justice and the trust climate and to find out how the demographic characteristics of employees can affect that relationship. Finally, it intended to check the levels of distributional justice and the trust climate (supervisor, organization, co-workers) among employees from three Middle Eastern countries (Syria, Egypt, and Turkey) since the researchers had not been able to find a great number of studies on this topic related to these countries.

The model used in the study depended on many studies related to the topic, and it was conducted through an online questionnaire. The results of the survey gave some ideas about the employees in the study population. The results could be summarized as follows:
There is a medium level positive relationship between distributive justice and the trust climate (trust in a supervisor, the organization, and co-workers). Religion can be a predictor for trust in a supervisor when it is related to distributive justice (this can be because when the employee knows the religion of the supervisor, it will make it easier to trust or distrust him/her). Employees who were older than 50 tend to have a higher level of trust in a supervisor; the second came those who were 20-29 years old. There were significant differences in the means of distributive justice, trust in co-workers, and trust in the organization related to work experience (employees who have 3-5 years experience tend to have the highest rate of trust, those who have more than ten years were the least likely to trust the organization or their co-workers). For distributive justice, employees with less than 1 year’s experience had the highest means of distributive justice, while the lowest mean was for those who had 5-10 years of experience. The basic reason for this was the unfairness of payments and rewards. For distributive justice, the middle level of the mean was prevalent among the employees. For the trust climate, the middle level of the mean was for trust in the organization, the high level of the mean was for trust in a supervisor, and both high and middle levels of the mean occurred for trust in co-workers. So, it can be said that having positive distributional justice will improve the trust climate in the organization, especially if there are young employees. When an organization has different religions in the workplace, the management should know how to choose the supervisors because it may have an impact on the trust levels of the employees. Finally, the organization’s management should make sure that they have fair pay and fair rewards because, without these, their employees will distrust their organization. Limitations of the current study are, to a large degree, apparent. First, the sample size of this study is relatively small (N=190) from three different countries. Hence this number is not enough to draw definite conclusions on the relationship between trust climate and distributive justice. Second, the percentage of the nationalities is not equal (Syrian, is the dominant nationality) due to difficulty in collecting data from the other two nationalities. Third, we have focused on our study on distributive justice between the other three organizational justice dimensions. Therefore, our results show only the effects of one aspect of organizational justice on a trust climate. Future research may extend our work, focusing more on the other dimensions of organizational justice to gain a comprehensive vision about the relationship between trust climate and organizational justice. Furthermore, future research may focus on other methods in collecting data, besides choosing a more significant size sample to make sure that the sample is more representative of the population. Finally, future research may try to use other demographics factors like ethnicity, educational background, and race since the studied countries have a diverse
population in all aspects; therefore, it may be interesting to figure out new relationships through them.

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**WPŁYW DYSTRYBUCYJNEJ SPRAWIEDLIWOŚCI NA ATMOFERĘ ZAUFANIA WŚRÓD PRACOWNIKÓW NA BLISKIM WSCHODZIE**

**Streszczenie:** Posiadanie atmosfery pozytywnego zaufania i sprawiedliwości dystrybucyjnej organizacji jest niezbędne dla każdej organizacji. Wiele badań wykazało, że
zarówno zaufanie, jak i sprawiedliwość organizacyjna mają bezpośredni pozytywny wpływ na wyniki organizacji. Jednak relacje pomiędzy nimi nie były szeroko rozważane, szczególnie na Bliskim Wschodzie. Dlatego badanie ma na celu zbadanie związku między organizacyjną sprawiedliwością dystrybucyjną a atmosferą zaufania wśród pracowników w trzech krajach Bliskiego Wschodu oraz ustalenie, jakie zmienne demograficzne wpływają na ten związek. Próba badawcza obejmowała 190 pracowników pochodzących z trzech krajów, a mianowicie z Syrii, Egiptu i Turcji. Aby osiągnąć cel badania, do pracowników wysłano kwestionariusz zawierający 20 pytań. Późniejsze metody analizy opisowej i korelacja Pearsona zostały wykorzystane do osiągnięcia celów tego badania. Badanie wykazało, że istnieje silny pozytywny związek między organizacyjną sprawiedliwością dystrybucyjną a atmosferą zaufania. Poza tym istniała znacząca różnica w organizacyjnej sprawiedliwości dystrybucyjnej, gdy była ona związana z doświadczeniem zawodowym. Istniały również statystycznie istotne różnice w zaufaniu do przełożonego, związane z wiekiem; ponadto istniały znaczone różnice w zaufaniu do organizacji i współpracowników w zależności od poziomu doświadczenia zawodowego, jednak płeć nie wykazywała znaczących różnic.

Słowa kluczowe: sprawiedliwość dystrybucyjna organizacji, atmosfera zaufania, zasoby ludzkie, zachowania organizacji zarządzającej, Syria, Egipt, Turcja

分配正义对中东雇员之间信任气候的影响

摘要：建立积极的信任气氛和组织分配正义对于任何组织都是必不可少的。许多研究发现，信任和组织公正对组织绩效都有直接的积极影响。但是，它们之间的关系尚未得到广泛考虑，尤其是在中东。因此，该研究旨在研究三个中东国家雇员之间的组织分配正义与信任气氛之间的关系，并找出哪些人口统计学变量会影响这种关系。该研究的样本包括来自叙利亚，埃及和土耳其三个国家的190名员工。为了实现研究目的，在线向员工发送了20项问卷回来的描述性分析方法和Pearson相关性用于实现本研究的目的。研究发现，组织分配正义与信任气氛之间存在很强的积极关系。此外，当组织分配正义与工作经验有关时，存在显着差异。与年龄相关的对主管的信任也有统计上的显着差异；此外，根据工作经验水平，对组织和同事的信任存在显着差异，但是，性别并没有显示任何显着差异。

关键词：组织分配正义，信任气氛，人力资源，管理组织行为，叙利亚，埃及，土耳其